VALLEY VOICE

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Questions of Money, Loyalty Plague County Democrats

Dave Adalian

Divided by questions of loyalty and the right to raise funds under the Democratic Party name, a gap has appeared between the leaders of the Tulare County Democratic Central Committee and members of the area's three largest Democratic organizations.

Abigail Solis, Visalia Democratic Club president.

The schism first became public earlier this month, when Ruben Macareno, chair of the publicly-elected TCDCC, issued a statement declaring the Visalia Democratic Club's inaugural Roosevelt Gala fund-raiser planned for later in March, illegal under state election law. The event, the statement said, was not sanctioned by the TCDCC, which it says has the sole right to raise funds under the party banner. The actions of the VDC's leadership, according to the statement, are also misdemeanor criminal violations of the California Election Code.

"The organizers (of the Roosevelt Gala) are in violation of state law which states that the only local entity to authorize a -political fund-raising event or activity for any party is the county's party's central committee," the statement said. "TCDCC reserves the right to fund-raise. ... Furthermore, the club (VDC), an established arm of the TCDCC, is currently being misused, as the TCDCC considers it an unsanctioned organization. ..."

In an interview, Macareno restated the TCDCC's position that it alone has the right to raise funds under the Democratic name in Tulare County.

"The county party feels it's an illegal event," he said.

Wrongdoing denied

Abigail Solis, president of VDC, denies any wrongdoing on the part of the

DEMOCRATS continued on **13 »**

The College of the Sequoias Hanford Center

COS Hanford Center Status Approved

Staff Reports

On March 16, the California Community College Board of Governors acted to approve the application for Center status of College of the Sequoias Hanford. An official announcement ceremony was held March 17 at the COS Hanford Center.

COS has been working for the past three years to submit the required Needs Assessment and application to the state Chancellor's Office for the Hanford site to be designated an official college "Center." A district earns this designation when it can demonstrate the investment of substantial resources to provide complete educational services at the campus location. This new status becomes effective July 1, 2015. This milestone marks a point in District history when COS, now a three-campus college, has both of the newest campuses designated by the state as college Centers.

The COS Hanford campus was fully funded by the area taxpayers through Measure "C" and constructed with no additional state facilities money. The campus opened in 2011 and Dr. Kristin Robinson was hired as the first campus Provost; she continues in that role today. Since that time, it has been the goal and desire of the District to develop the campus to qualify for official Center status.

Center designation makes a campus eligible for state facilities funds and ongoing augmentation in state funding to the general fund once student enrollment grows to 1000 Full Time Equivalent Students (FTES). As the FTES in Hanford grows to 1000, the District will earn $1M in ongoing general fund revenue.

New Developments in Suit Against TCAC

Sexual misconduct revelations against one of the defendants to be included in suit

Catherine Doe

On March 10, a "Case Management Conference" was held in the suit against Tulare County by former Tulare County Animal Control (TCAC) employees Paul Grenseman and Julia Jimenez. A date for a jury trial was set for December 7. Before the trial, a court ordered mediation must be accomplished no later than October 22, to see if a settlement can be reached. The case is assigned to Judge Brett Hillman.

On December 4, 2013, Grenseman and Jimenez, both working for TCAC, were "walked off the job" and told that they were under investigation and being put on administrative leave. Jimenez was subsequently fired on July 2, 2014, and Grenseman retired on June 5 of that year. Last November, Grenseman and Jimenez filed suit in Tulare County Superior Court against five Tulare County employees and the county. The plaintiffs are suing for discrimination, racial/ethnic and sexual harassment, failure to prevent discrimination and failure to prevent harassment as well retaliation for objecting to, speaking out against, and complaining of illegal discrimination and harassment.

To defend itself against Grenseman and Jimenez, the county has retained McCormick Barstow LLP, a national law firm with 89 lawyers. The law firm, founded in Fresno 51 years ago, represents major real estate developers and farmers, and fought a recent case

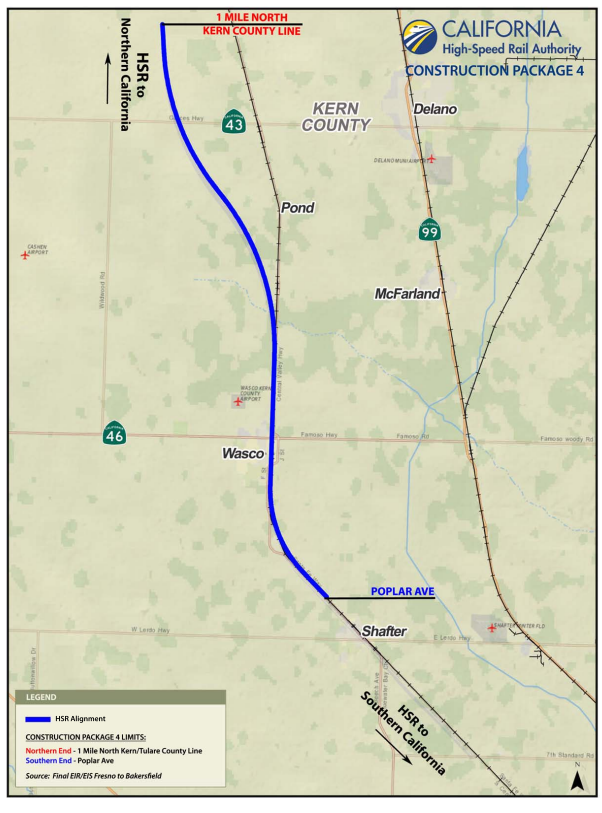
TCAC continued on **8 »**

HSR Authority Receives Qualifications

On March 13 the High-Speed Rail Authority received Statements of Qualifications (SOQ) from five world class teams to design and build the next segment of high-speed rail in the Central Valley, called Construction Package 4 (CP 4).

Statement of Qualifications were received from (in alphabetical order):

- California Rail Builders
- Central Valley Connection Builders
- Dragados/Flatiron, JV
- Salini Impregilo/Security Paving, JV
- Tutor Perini/Zachry/Parsons



This is the first part of a two part procurement process – now that the SOQs have been received, the Authority will evaluate them and create a list of qualified bidders to submit formal proposals.

The proposals will then be evaluated based on a best value basis that includes technical and price components.

CP 4 consists of approximately 22 miles of civil works beginning one mile north of the Kern/Tulare County line and ending at Poplar Road north of Bakersfield.

This extends South of Construction Package 2-3.

CP 4 has an estimated $400-500 million contract value.

Farmers Describe Impact of 'Zero Allocation'

Kate Campbell, CFBF

Facing another year with no surface water deliveries, farmers who buy water from the federal Central Valley Project expressed deep frustration with the lack of water supplies, and deep concern about what another year of water shortages will mean for their crops, employees and communities.

The CVP said last week it expects to deliver no water to most of its agricultural customers, after also allocating no water to those customers in 2014.

Operators of the State Water Project, meanwhile, said Monday that it now expects to deliver 20 percent of contract amounts to its customers, up from an earlier allocation of 15 percent, citing improved runoff from winter storms.

But the continued "zero" allocation from the CVP, the state's largest supplier of irrigation water, will extend suffering in rural communities, according to California Farm Bureau Federation President Paul Wenger.

"The CVP announcement is both saddening and maddening," Wenger said. "It's saddening because the continued cutoff of water will prolong the impact of water shortages on farmers, their employees and rural communities. It's maddening because there is still a struggle to manage water wisely and flexibly in California, especially in dry years."

FARMERS continued on **10 »**

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FROM THE PUBLISHER'S DESK

What Will We Do With the Broken Congress?

The famous question, posed in song, asks, "What will we do with the drunken sailor?" Apparently, there are only four acceptable options: The crew could "shave his belly with a rusty razor"--which sounds distinctly unpleasant--or, much more agreeably, "put him in a longboat till he's sober." The sailor, presumably, would sleep it off there. But the crew also might--appallingly--"stick him in the scuppers with a hosepipe on him." Shades of water-boarding here, or the old black and white footage of protesters being fire-hosed. My vote is for number four: "Put him in the bed with the Captain's daughter." That will always be my vote, if I'm ever asked.

Only I never am. Nobody is--the question in question is simply the title of a sea chanty. Yet here is something to ponder, and it can even be done while expropriating the tune: What will we do with the broken Congress?

--Make it take a vote on the war we're fighting?

--Put it on oath and then make it speak truth?

--Stick it on a corner with pencils to sell?

Forget the Captain's daughter--Congress has been screwing its constituents for years. Since the Clinton administration, Republicans--in particular--have been ensorcelled purely by opposition. Let's overlook the brinksmanship and obstructionism this has caused--the two government shutdowns and numerous debt ceiling crises--and consider the most recent shenanigans undergone by Republicans in both the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Independent of--indeed, specifically exclusive to--White House (or even State Department) approval, House Speaker John Boehner invited Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to address a joint session of Congress on the issue of U.S.-Iran negotiations over nuclear weaponry.

"Congress can make this decision on its own," Boehner told reporters back on January 21. "I don't believe I'm poking anyone in the eye. There is a serious threat that exists in the world. The fact is that there needs to be a more serious conversation in America about how serious the threat is from radical Islamic jihadists and the threat posed by Iran."

But Robert Kagan, senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, wrote in a column in the January 30 *Washington Post* that, "U.S. congressional leaders probably should have given this invitation more thought. Although not a violation of the letter of the Constitution, it certainly seems to violate the idea that the nation speaks with one voice on foreign policy and that foreign leaders cannot choose whether they prefer to deal with Congress or the president."

It gets worse. Worse because while the House did extend an invitation, said invitation was for that body to listen to an address. And there is a passivity to that. On March 9, however, 47 United States Senators quite proactively sent "An Open Letter to the Leaders of the Islamic Republic of Iran." Many have opined that Arkansas Senator Tom Cotton and his 46 Republican cohorts violated the Logan Act when they penned the letter, which has undermined President Obama's ongoing efforts to negotiate a nuclear agreement with those Iranian leaders. Passed in 1799, the Logan Act forbids any U.S. citizen--acting without official U.S. authority--from influencing "disputes or controversies" involving the U.S. and a foreign government.

Still, nowhere--at least in print--have I been able to read the letter. I offer it here to be remembered during every election season these Senators might run for office. Any office. I offer it here to hound any of their presidential aspirations.

It has come to our attention while observing your nuclear negotiations with our government that you may not fully understand our constitutional system. Thus, we are writing to bring to your attention two features of our Constitution — the power to make binding international agreements and the different character of federal offices — which you should seriously consider as negotiations progress.

First, under our Constitution, while the president negotiates international agreements, Congress plays the significant role of ratifying them. In the case of a treaty, the Senate must ratify it by a two-thirds vote. A so-called congressional-executive agreement requires a majority vote in both the House and the Senate (which, because of procedural rules, effectively means a three-fifths vote in the Senate). Anything not approved by Congress is a mere executive agreement.

Second, the offices of our Constitution have different characteristics.

For example, the president may serve only two 4-year terms, whereas senators may serve an unlimited number of 6-year terms. As applied today, for instance, President Obama will leave office in January 2017, while most of us will remain in office well beyond then — perhaps decades.

What these two constitutional provisions mean is that we will consider any agreement regarding your nuclear-weapons program that is not approved by the Congress as nothing more than an executive agreement between President Obama and Ayatollah Khamenei. The next president could revoke such an executive agreement with the stroke of a pen and future Congresses could modify the terms of the agreement at any time.

We hope this letter enriches your knowledge of our constitutional system and promotes mutual understanding and clarity as nuclear negotiations progress.

Let us never forget that the following Republican Senators signed this...vomitus: Cotton-AR; Hatch-UT; Grassley-IA; McConnell-KY; Shelby-AL; McCain-AZ; Inhofe-OK; Roberts-KS; Sessions-AL; Enzi-WY; Crapo-ID; Graham-SC; Cornyn-TX; Burr-NC; Thune-SD; Isakson-GA; Vitter-LA; Barrasso-WY; Wicker-MS; Risch-ID; Kirk-IL; Blunt-MO; Moran-KS; Portman-OH; Boozman-AZ; Toomey-PA; Hoeven-ND; Rubio-FL; Johnson-WI; Paul-KY; Lee-UT; Ayotte-NH; Heller-NV; Cruz-TX; Fischer-NE; Capito-WV; Gardner-CO; Lankford-OK; Daines-MT; Rounds-SD; Perdue-GA; Tillis-NC; Ernst-IA; Sasse-NE; Sullivan-AK.

And let us remember that the following Republican Senators did not: Murkowski-AK; Flake-AZ; Coats-IN; Collins-ME; Cochran-MS; Alexander-TN; Corker-TN.

— Joseph Oldenbourg

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Political Fix

Catherine Doe

A Gay Day In the California Republican Party

Connie Conway has announced that she intends to run for the 16th district State Senate Seat currently being held by Jean Fuller. Ms. Fuller will be terming out in 2018. After the November elections wrapped up last year I recall someone telling me that Ms. Conway was going to have some competition for that seat. Assemblywoman Shannon Grove of Bakersfield also has her eye on the senate seat.

Ms. Grove, who represents the 34th assembly district located in Kern County, is going to term-out of the assembly in 2016 and is going to need a job. Coming from Bakersfield gives Ms. Grove a major advantage over Ms. Conway because the majority of the senate district's constituents live in Kern County. In fact, Ms. Grove is now sitting in Ms. Fuller's former assembly seat.

What will not work to Ms. Grove's advantage is her deep southern Republican attitude on gays. I don't recall Ms. Conway campaigning, or making any statements concerning gay issues. For that matter, I don't recall Rep. Devin Nunes, State Senator Andy Vidak, Assembly Member Devon Mathis or Rep. David Valadao making their views known either. In these times of drought, sky rocketing education and medical costs, coupled with low paying jobs, I prefer it that way. I remember Ms. Conway saying the issue has been settled in California, so why debate it?

Yet Assemblywoman Grove took the energy to debate Chairman Jim Brulte over whether to allow a vote to recognize the Log Cabin Republicans by the California Republican Party (CRP) during their biannual conference. The debate was over whether chartering the group of gay Republicans fell in line with the CRP bylaws. Grove insisted the vote should not be allowed under current bylaws and that certain lifestyle stances of the Log Cabin group are inconsistent with the party platform.

The CRP did take a vote and delegates passed the resolution overwhelmingly by 861-293. Log Cabin Republicans, a club founded more than three decades ago by gay Republicans in California, had been seeking the party's recognition for 18 years. The vote will give official party designation to the club and sent a signal about the direction of the party that has struggled for a unified vision. The California Republican Party is the first state party to officially recognize a statewide Log Cabin group.

Someone needs to remind Ms. Grove that she is a Republican, the "get the government out of my life" party. Republicans don't want the government in our doctor's office, bedroom or marriage and neither does the rest of California.

And Another Thing……

OK, I'll admit that I complain a lot, maybe too much, about the nation's healthcare system and the *Visalia Times-Delta*. The difference is that I hate our healthcare system, but I rather like the *Visalia Times -Delta* (*VTD*).

So before I continue my rant from last week's article I need to clarify something. I read every word of the *VTD,* well at least the front section and *Choices*, and often quote from the paper. I envy David Castellon's writing skills and enjoy reading Teresa Douglass' stories. I admire Marina Gaytan for being the only journalist I know of to successfully make the transition from the *Valley Voice* to the *VTD*. (John Lindt doesn't count because he has become part of the *VTD* "local" problem writing a regular column about Tulare County while living on the Central Coast.)

In my article, I expressed some hurt feelings that no one at the *VTD* read the *Valley Voice*. But when I opened up the weekend edition of the opinion page, and saw that they listed Melinda Morales as part of the editorial board and still the Community Conversation Editor, I realized that they do not read their own newspaper either! Ms. Morales was let go more than a month ago.

Ms. Morales, along with other perfectly fine journalists, got the can two months ago when everyone was forced to reapply for their job. Supposedly, those let go didn't "fit" into Gannett's "newsroom of the future." Someone needs to tell Gannett that they do not fit into the "future of Visalia."

Another troubling turn of events pointed out to me by our paper's tech wizard, is that the *VTD* readers now have to share three of *VTD*'s best writers with the *Salinas Californian*: Teresa Douglass, James Ward and Dan Kukla. They now have to write for both papers. Ms. Douglass has expanded her "*Inspire*" section to Salinas and is soliciting their local inspiring stories.

In the *VTD Living Magazine*, on the first line of the first page, is a message from the Publisher, Paula Goudreau, who I was told lives in Stockton, "We live here, we love it here and we welcome you."

Well, I actually do live here, and so does the entire *Valley Voice* staff, and as a local I encourage you to subscribe to the *Visalia Times-Delta*, but fight to keep it local.

History Repeats Itself

California only has one more year of water left, Iran is close to getting the nuclear bomb, and millions of people may lose their healthcare depending on a Supreme Court decision. But let's talk about Hillary Clinton's emails --or not.

Right now, Ms. Clinton is out-polling all of the top-tier Republican presidential contenders by a wide margin, even in the middle of her "scandal." Her closest contender is Scott Walker, who is leading that party's polls.

Can you say shredded beef? Which is exactly what Mr. Walker is going to be while standing on the same debate stage as Ms. Clinton. Like Chris Christy, who has fallen off the politically viable deep end, Mr. Walker is also having trouble at home. He is pushing a half billion dollar tax cut as his state is facing a projected $1 billion deficit by next year. Right now there is a $283 million deficit that needs to be closed by June. To do that he is skipping more than $100 million in debt payments to give the illusion of balancing the books – and the other GOP candidates are starting to pay attention.

Besides, let's just state the obvious why Mr. Walker's time in the limelight will be short-lived. I didn't agree with Mitt Romney's "severely conservative" domestic policies and half-baked international ones. But Mr. Romney looked presidential. Mr. Walker does not have the chops, education or the looks for the national spotlight.

So who are Ms. Clinton's competitors on the Democratic side? Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley, former Virginia Senator Jim Webb and Missouri Senator Claire McCaskill.

Haven't heard of them? Well I bet you have heard of the next guy I'm going to mention, Senator Cory Booker from New Jersey. He was the former--and very popular--mayor of Newark who won a special election in 2013, and the general election in 2014 for the New Jersey Senate. More importantly, he saved a dog from freezing in sub-zero weather and ran into a burning building to save an old lady, suffering second degree burns on his hands in the process.

Let's reflect back for a moment on what derailed Ms. Clinton's 2008 run for president, shall we? A young, Black, charismatic senator.

Democrats are freaking out right now, not just about her email scandal, but that inevitably another scandal is right around the corner. This time during the last presidential election Ms. Clinton was in, in 2007, she had declared her candidacy and was on the campaign trail. In 2015, she has only made three public appearances.

Who is going to be the party's plan B if she self-implodes? It is possible, if

POLITICAL FIX continued on **4 »**

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Emergency Services Continues to Seek Information to Aide Drought Victims

Nancy Vigran

Along with the continued drought comes Tulare County Emergency's Services reach out for those who have water issues. In Eastern Porterville there is a cluster of those, whose wells have gone dry.

On March 6, the agency along with CSET and United Way volunteers, and Tulare County firefighters spent the day going door to door, finding out the problems and working on the solutions for these residents.

"It is not that we feel this area is more important (than any other in the county)," said Andrew Lockman, emergency services manager. "It is that it is a microcosm of what is going on in the rest of the county."

Contact was made at 55% of the 1,797 property parcels identified to reach, he said. Emergency Services identifies them as parcels, but there may be multiple homes on some of these.

From that, 200 surveys indicating the number of people living there, ages, annual total income and whether or not their well is functioning or gone dry, were filled out. This helps, not only with local services, but with requests for state and federal assistance, Lockman said.

"There are a lot of people we reached, who we had not gotten data on before," he said.

Volunteers continued to visit residences in the area for the week following. And many residents also visited the drought resources booth at the Step Up event at Iglesia Emmanuel Church on March 13.

All of the local input helps to evaluate just how the bottled water program and portable showers are working out, Lockman said. There were 26 new applications filled out for the bottled water program.

The bottled water program is set up to deliver the equivalent of ½ gallon of water per person, per day. That meets the daily requirement for water intake, Lockman said.

"And we had to fight pretty profusely to get this," he said.

"Our goal is to get (water) tanks out to everybody (who needs them) – that is our short term goal," he said.

The tanks Lockman refers to are 1,500 – 2,000 gallon water tanks on loan to residents, which are refilled on a regular basis, dependent on the predetermined need of that residence.

"The long term goal is to get a waterline expansion to those out in the country (and outside city limits)," Lockman added.

For the property owners whose wells have gone dry, it is either just too expensive, or they do not want to invest in digging deeper or new wells on their property. Many of the residents in the area are living in rental property. It has taken some time for many of these people to develop trust with Emergency Services, and to accept their help and open up to them.

Lockman said he was very pleased with how the day and subsequent week went.

"I am very thankful to have gotten the volunteers that we did," he said.

While the immediate water needs for most contacted are being met, there is still a demand for water. Twelve pallets of drinking water were delivered to the Iglesia Emmanuel Church last week, and within hours all of the water was gone.

PORTERVILLE COLLEGE WATER DRIVE

Porterville College ASPC (Associated Students of Porterville College) is hosting a special water drive, in conjunction with Bakersfield College, College of the Sequoias campuses and local churches (First Assembly of God and Abundant Harvest) from 9 to 5pm on Friday, March 20.

The drive will benefit the many residents of East Porterville whose wells have run dry. Water can be dropped off during the event at Porterville College's Jamison Stadium parking lot (off Main and College Ave.) or prior to the event at the Porterville College ASPC office.

Porterville College is located at 100 East College Avenue. For more information, call ASPC at (559) 791-2325.

Tulare-Kings CWA To Award Livestock Project Grants to Local Youth

Staff Reports

The Tulare-Kings Chapter of the California Women for Agriculture (CWA) is excited to announce it will award 8 livestock project grants in the amount of $300 each to any Tulare or Kings County youth (4-H, FFA, Independent) exhibiting at the 2015 Tulare County Fair or Kings Fair.

Grant money may be applied toward the initial animal purchase or any costs associated with raising the animal in preparation of being shown at one of the above-mentioned fairs.

Applications are available now by contacting Tulare-Kings CWA at tularekingscwa@gmail.com. Quality applicants will demonstrate a strong leadership potential by describing their current or future livestock project, their involvement with 4-H or FFA, and by sharing their favorite part of exhibiting at their local county fair. Applicants will also be asked to write a 200-word essay explaining how they plan to use the funds and what they expect to learn from their project. A letter of recommendation by a 4-H Project Leader or FFA Advisor is required and should address financial need and student responsibility.

The application deadline is May 1st. Applications can be submitted via email to tularekingscwa@gmail.com or by mail to the CWA Project Grant Committee, PO Box 3812, Visalia, CA 93278.

The California Women for Agriculture (CWA) is a voluntary, non-profit organization of women dedicated to educating our communities, children, and elected officials about agriculture. In addition to livestock project grants, the Tulare-Kings Chapter awards $5,000 in scholarships annually to local students pursuing careers in agriculture, provides over $1,000 in grants for school garden programs, and contributes to various local agricultural initiatives aimed at educating students about the importance of agriculture.

The Tulare-Kings CWA is committed to promoting agriculture in our local communities through a wide variety of programs and scholarships and it is through the generous support of community members and businesses that we are able to increase our involvement in more activities that promote agricultural awareness.

Political Fix

Continued from p. 1

Cory Booker steps up to the plate, history might repeat itself, not just in Ms. Clinton's world but for the Republican Party? Instead of spending the next four years trying to derail a woman, the Republicans will be back at square one trying to derail the presidency of a Black man.

It's A Disposable World

It's a slow political week of hashing and rehashing of candidates for the 2016 presidential election who haven't even declared, so let's talk about old age.

The oldest person in the world was born in a small Mexican village in 1887. Her name is Leandra Becerra Lumbreras and, yes, that makes her 127 years old. Most people have not heard of her because she lost her official birth certificate when moving 40 years ago, so she does not qualify for being included in the Guinness Book of World Records. Mexico has confirmed her age though through a legal probe conducted by the state of Tamaulipas.

Amazingly, she is completely lucid and can recount her days as leader of the "Adelitas," a group of female soldiers who fought with the rebels in the Mexican Revolution. She can remember hiding in caves with her children as government troops searched homes for potential recruitments. She has outlived her five children, the last one passing away at 90 years old in 2013. She has many grandchildren and great grandchildren with which to share her tales.

Officially, oldest person in the world of course lives in Japan. Her name is Misao Okawa and she was born on March 5, 1898. On the day before her 117th birthday Associated Press asked about the secret of her longevity. Her response was, "I wonder about that too." She also said about her long life, "it seemed rather short."

Japan has more centenarians than anywhere else in the world at 58,000.

That means two things: that when the oldest person in the world dies they are usually replaced with someone else who lives in Japan, most likely a woman. Second, Japan's huge elderly population has created a new phenomenon. Sales of adult diapers will overtake baby diapers by next year.

Can you see that happening in Mexico?

According to CNBC, "Japan, which is home to the fastest aging society globally, citizens aged 65 and older account for 25.1 percent of the overall population, up from 17.4 percent in 2000." Interestingly, this demographic mirrors what is happening in the wider Detroit area. Residents over the age of 65 are expected to make up about 24 percent of the region's population by 2040, compared to about 13 percent currently.

So both areas' expanding base of elderly consumers, a demographic wearing disposable diapers and having the most disposable income, will prove a lucrative opportunity for retailers. Now if they can learn how to use the computer they could send Hillary an email.

Rants and Raves

I know there is nothing readers love more than a rant from a middle aged woman, but you are just going to have to wait. My first installment, and probably my second, is going to be a rave. Inspired from Craig's List Rants and Raves, I've been wanting to do a mini-column written by middle-aged women and this will be the theme. So any readers over 40-years old are welcome to write the column. Just email me -the juicier the better.

For this rave, I want to talk about someone who goes about her life not knowing how much better she makes the world. My son had to go to court for a trespassing charge and was sentenced to 40 hours community service. He had a year to complete the sentence, so no sweat, right?

He made a lot of calls, and even volunteered an entire day, but the person in charge said he couldn't sign the papers. Several months passed with no luck and I told my son with an air of confidence, "let me handle it." Of course, I thought I'd have him signed up for his community service in 15 minutes. Fifteen minutes turned into all day, turned into all week which turned into months, until I was crying on my bed wondering what went wrong with the world. Organizations my extended family had donated to now would not even return my call.

Then somewhere from the recesses of my brain I had a vision of walking by the Discovery Shop on Main Street. I called the shop and within the half-hour the manager called me back. She accommodated my son's schedule then set him up for a 40-hour work week.

The name of the manager is Carol Farris and she renewed my faith in humanity. When my son's friend needed to get community service for a DUI they went straight to Carol and she set him right up. I doubt my son and his friend are the only people she has helped. I bet helping people is just a part of her day and she has no idea of the positive im-

Visalia City Council Votes on Extending Stage 4 Water Restrictions

Catherine Doe

Visalia City Council voted to extend the Stage 4 watering restrictions during their regular meeting, March 16th. They also voted to modify the city's watering schedule. The watering restrictions were set to expire April 17, in the hope of a normal rain year. Because of the limited amount of rainfall this year and that the state is in its fourth year of drought, the council agreed to extend and modify the Water Conservation Ordinance. The vote was 4-1 with Council Member Warren Gubler voting no. Gubler did not agree with raising the fines for noncompliance and said, he felt that the current watering restrictions were strict enough. City staff will bring the item back to Council for a final vote at the next meeting on Monday, April 6.

The following is an edited version of the staff report to the city council, which outlines the background and their recommendations:

The drought is continuing for a fourth historic year. Staff recommends that the City Council continue the Stage 4 outdoor irrigation restrictions and consider modifications to the ordinance.

Council should pass a resolution by April 17 to continue Stage 4. Staff is recommending some minor changes to the ordinance based on citizen suggestions and for better enforcement. Staffis providing suggestions of other changes Council could consider if it wishes to increaserestrictions..

Generally, the Stage 4 regulations have worked well. It was a challenging January and February though, with no rain and unseasonably warm weather and no watering allowed. Some Visalians found it hard to comply with the ordinance. Following are some minor changes recommended by staff for Council's consideration:

Washing down driveways, sidewalks, or other paved surfaces is prohibited unless needed for public health and safety. Some businesses such as fast-food restaurants have a regular health and safety need to wash down. Staff proposes requiring use of a low-flow high-pressure washer for this purpose. Such pressure washers use 2 or 3 gallons per minute (gpm) compared with 10 to 20 gpm for a hose and are much more effective requiring less operating time and less water use. Many businesses already use pressure washers.

Prohibit washing of buildings with a hose. Allow washing with a pressure washer for preparation for painting or if preparing the house or business to put up for sale.

Prohibit use of temporary water slides, or alternatively, require that they be used only where the water drains to grass or a landscaped area and that the water only be on when in use.

Prohibit watering during the rain. Currently there are no guidelines to watering in the event there is rain. Suggested guidelines is no watering for 48 hours after rain.

Prohibit all overseeding. Presently, the ordinance prohibits overseeding with annual ryegrass. This has been confusing because other grasses are also used for annual overseeding.

Stage 4 provides for issuance of new plant establishment permits to allow watering outside of the ordinance schedule for 21 days. Staff recommends that new plant establishment permits only be issued for limited turf areas or perhaps only for warm-season grass (i.e., no fescue or other cool season grasses).

Allow watering once during mid-February to enable application of pre-emergent weed control. Presently, no watering is allowed in February. Landscape professionals have informed staff that pre-emergent weed control should be applied in February and needs to be watered in.

Modify the "Large Landscape" and "Sports Field" exceptions to require annual renewal and proof of conservation. Presently, the ordinance allows the City Manager to issue exceptions if the applicant provides an alternative watering schedule that reduces overall water use by 20% for Sports Fields or 30% for Large Landscapes. Compliance with the alternative watering schedule is on the honor system. While most applicants appear to be following their approved schedule, some appear not to be. Staff recommends that the ordinance be modified to require applicants on an annual basis to provide proof of reduction either through water bills or by electric bills if on private wells.

Staff also recommends establishment of a "Water Conservation School." This would be akin to traffic school in that first-time citation recipients could elect to attend Water Conservation School and the $100 fine would be waived. Staff envisions this as an approximately 2-hour class that would be held perhaps quarterly depending upon demand. It would focus on teaching attendees the reasons why conservation is important, where our water comes from, groundwater overdraft, the drought, the water conservation ordinance, water conservation tips and tricks, etc.

Should Council desire to place further restrictions on the watering schedule, staff is providing three alternatives for consideration. However, Council should recognize that any further watering restrictions likely will cause significant damage to landscapes including loss of cool-season lawns such as fescue and to some shrubs and trees.

Staff is not recommending changes to current watering schedules due to the risk imposed to resident's investments into their landscaping. The City has expended considerable effort informing the public about the Stage 4 schedule, which is complex. Even with these efforts, there is still some confusion about the schedule. Staff would advise Council that changes to the schedule will likely increase confusion with the public, however, staff will work hard to minimize confusion through a sustained outreach effort.

While a majority of Visalians are following the watering schedule, a sizable minority is not.

During January and February when no watering is allowed other than by hand, approximately 22% of water was still used for irrigation. Presently, the Natural Resource Conservation Division has three part-time Water Conservation Education Coordinators that enforce the ordinance, as well as provide public education and outreach. Part-time staff members are limited to 20 hours per week, so these three staff provides a total

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Tulare County Women of History

Catherine Doe

On Wednesday Night, March 11, the Tulare County Library held a reception to kick off their "Women in Tulare County History" exhibit. To honor this eclectic group of 10 women, a photograph and profile of each of their lives is displayed on the second floor of the library outside the Annie R. Mitchell History room. The exhibit runs through June 4. Exhibit hours are from 1-5 pm, Tuesday through Friday.

Choosing the 10 finalists was a collaborative effort of volunteers and History Room staff, who searched the historical documents in the Annie R. Mitchell History Room. The volunteers used their knowledge of local history and sometimes picked the brains of others around them for women to profile. The goal was to show a variety of women from different backgrounds. There were many of great women educators from which to choose, and the exhibit includes two of them, but they also wanted to show other experiences, such as mountaineers, artists and politicians.

Three of the women being profiled in the exhibit are still alive. One of them, Lali Moheno, attended the opening reception and entertained the group with stories of her mother and the history of the Farmworker Women's Health Conference which she founded. She told of how her mother and father were field workers but managed to send five of their eight living children to college. Moheno inherited and learned from her mother how to be politically active and make a difference in people's lives, especially women working in the fields. Moheno expressed her gratitude to the library staff for being included in a group of such accomplished women.

To honor her mother, who died prematurely because of several preventable health problems, Moheno has organized a yearly conference to educate women on the health services available in Tulare County. Moheno's mother died because she did not have equal access to medical services or insurance, and her goal is to try and prevent the same thing happen to other farm worker women.

She organized the first Farm worker Women's Health and Safety Conference luncheon 13 years ago and hoped that 50 women would show up. Two hundred-fifty women showed up and she had to call her husband and borrow his credit card. Since that first conference, the event has expanded to more than 1000 attendees. Now Moheno doesn't have to ask for her husband's credit card but receives donations and vendor fees to cover the cost of the lunch.

This year's conference will be Friday, November 6, at the Visalia Convention Center. She puts on the conference in conjunction with Tulare County Health and Human Services. The Tulare County Sheriff's Department and District Attorney's office also play a large role at the conference so the women can acquaint themselves with local law enforcement and learn about how to stop domestic violence and curtail gang activity.

Another honoree, Rose Ann Vuich, who passed away in 2001, was introduced by her dear friend, Consuelo Prado Alvarado. Vuich was the first female state senator in California. When she was elected there was no women's bathroom in the senate building.

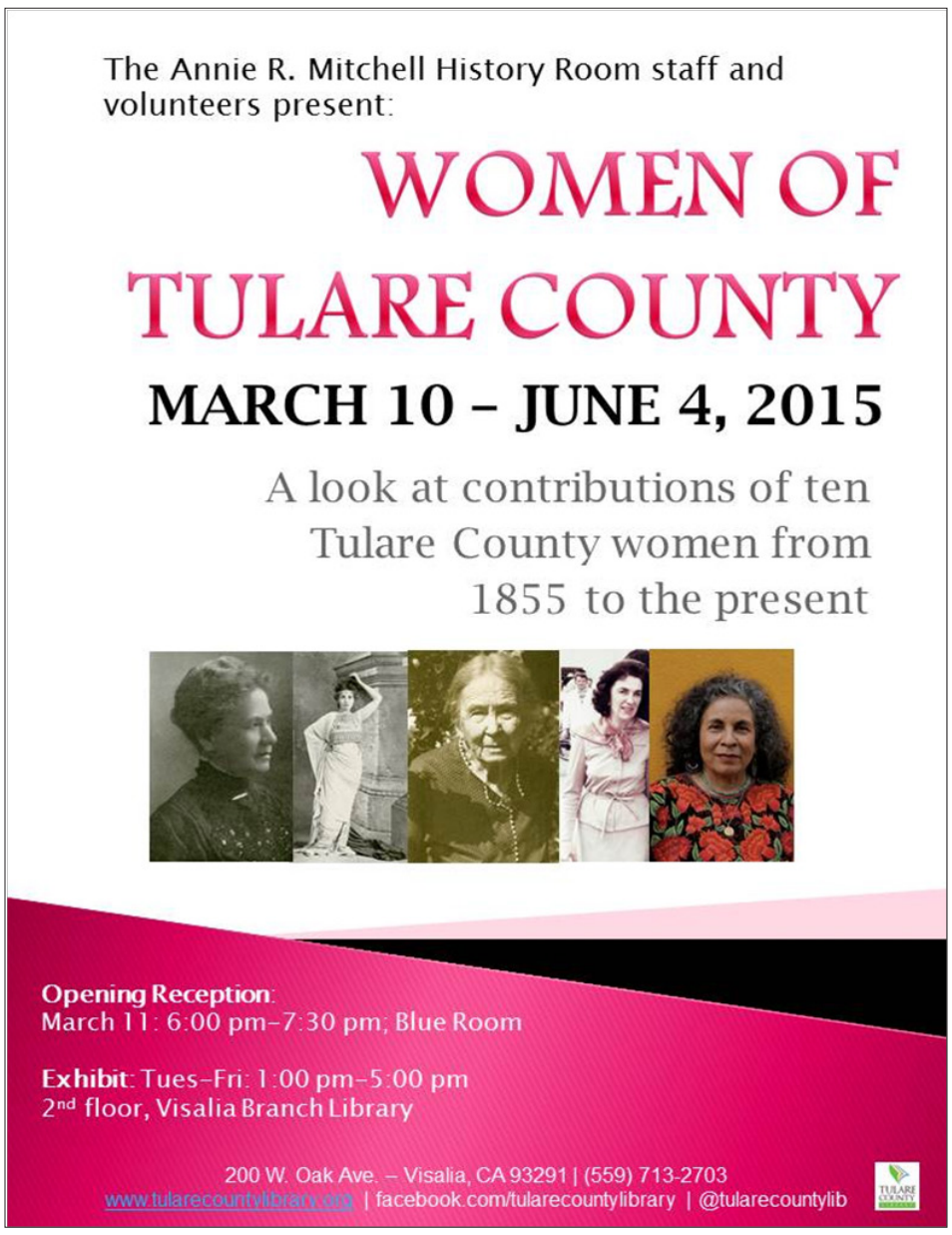
After retirement in 1992, Vuich returned to her hometown of Dinuba and lived with her brother. Neither had children, and Alvarado offered to take care of them as they aged. Throughout the years, Alvarado's children became Vuich and her brother's grandchildren and both families spent holidays and birthdays together.

She reminded the group that the interchange of State Route 41 and State Route 180 in Fresno is named the Rose Ann Vuich Interchange and that Dinuba named a park in her honor.

Alvarado also introduced a second honoree, who is one of the three still living, Ester Hernandez. Hernandez is an artist who also grew up in Dinuba who is a leader in the Chicano civil rights arts movement. Alvarado was a close childhood friend of Hernandez'. Hernandez was not able to attend the reception herself, but Alvarado brought a sample of one of Hernandez' most famous art pieces. Alvarado brought a small replica of the well-recognized "Sun Maid" painting that shows the Sun Maid girl as a skeleton, as a result the use of pesticides in grape growing.

Jean Shepard, is the third living honoree and was a country and western singer born in Oklahoma and raised in Visalia. She was inducted into the County Music Hall of Fame in 2011.

The exhibit coincides with Women's History Month, which became a national event starting in 1987. This exhibit showcases extraordinary women of Tulare County from 1855 to the present through a series of posters.


The Annie R. Mitchell History Room staff and volunteers present:
WOMEN OF TULARE COUNTY
MARCH 10 – JUNE 4, 2015
A look at contributions of ten Tulare County women from 1855 to the present
Opening Reception:
March 11: 6:00 pm–7:30 pm; Blue Room
Exhibit: Tues–Fri: 1:00 pm–5:00 pm
2nd floor, Visalia Branch Library
200 W. Oak Ave. – Visalia, CA 93291 | (559) 713-2703
www.tularecountylibrary.org | facebook.com/tularecountylibrary | @tularecountylib

Other honorees, as revealed in an article by *The Fresno Bee* include:

• Josephine Allensworth, wife of the founder of Allensworth, the only town in California founded and run by African Americans. She made sure Allensworth had a library.

• Anna Mills Johnston, the first woman to climb Mt. Whitney, in 1878, despite a physical handicap, accomplishing the feat with three other women and five men.

• Eleanor Calhoun, a well-connected actress of the late 1800s, who married a Serbian prince and has been dubbed "the princess of Visalia."

• Mary Garcia Pohot, a Wukchumni basket weaver, singer and Native American story teller. Her basketry is on display at the Tulare County Museum in Mooney Grove Park.

• Ina Stiner, a Porterville high school teacher and school librarian who wrote books about Porterville history, especially pioneers.

• Annie Mitchell, a Visalia historian and educator who wrote several books about Tulare County history and for whom, the history room at the library is named.

Lisa Raney, reference librarian and coordinator of the project, said, "during the first stage of our research, we came up with a list of over 20 women, who were noteworthy for achievements that they had done on their own – I wanted to be sure that the exhibit highlighted women for their achievements. Raney wrote in the *Visalia Times-Delta*, "Other women strongly considered for the project were Elsie Crowley, teacher and principal in Visalia schools for 41 years; Mary Graves Clarke, surviving member of the ill-fated Donner Party; Alice Royal, born and raised in the Allensworth Colony and a strong advocate for Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park, and Graciela Martinez, whose lifetime of service to farmworkers and others underrepresented in society includes working in the civil rights movement in the 1960s and with Proyecto Campesino."

For more information on this exhibit, contact Lisa Raney at 713-2723 or the reference desk at 713-2703. The Visalia Library is located at 200 W. Oak Ave, Visalia, CA 93291.

The Tulare County Library serves all the citizens of Tulare County with locations in 15 communities, five book machines and an online presence at www.tularecountylibrary.org.

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Next deadline: March 26, 2015

Water

Continued from p. 5

of 60 hours per week with only one staff on duty at a time. Staff an additional part-time Water Conservation Education Coordinator to provide increased enforcement and education if it appears costs can be recovered through enforcement revenues.

Background Discussion:

The state is in a fourth year of historic drought. Last year, the City Council modified the Water Conservation Ordinance and enacted Stage 4 in response to the third year of drought. Effective April 17, 2014, Stage 4 reduced outdoor irrigation depending upon the month. June through September remained at three days per week. Council enacted Stage 4 for a one-year period and it will roll back to Stage 3 on April 17, 2015, unless re-authorized by Council by resolution.

In addition to enacting Stage 4, Council appropriated $25,000 from the General Fund for a drought outreach/water conservation campaign. The City leveraged these funds by partnering with Cal Water on several joint drought-outreach/water conservation efforts.

The combination of the Stage 4 regulations and expanded outreach has been effective in reducing Visalia's water use.

Total Cal Water pumping in 2014 was 29,686 AF, the first time pumping was below 30,000 AF since 2001. Approximately 3,540 acre-feet (AF) less water was used from April 2014 through January 2015 compared with 2013, a 12% reduction.

Unfortunately, the drought is continuing into a fourth year. While the recent rain showers helped landscapes a bit, they did not put measureable snow in the Sierras. The Sierra snow-water content is at only 22% of normal for this time of year. This is considerably less than last year when snow-water content was at 36%.

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation recently announced that there would be no deliveries of Central Valley Project water to farmers for a second historic year in a row. There have been 946 reported private well failures in Tulare County including some in the City of Visalia.

Fortunately, Visalia has significant groundwater supplies and Cal Water reports that it does not anticipate shortages or well failures. However, Visalia's groundwater occurs within a large interconnected regional aquifer system. Pumping in Visalia affects other areas and vice versa.

City Council Votes

Whereas the city staff recommended that the council not amend the watering schedule, Council Member Greg Collins brought up the fact that the state mandated watering schedule only allows two watering days per week. Visalia allows three, in June, July, August and September. Collins also suggested a more punitive tier billing system.

Mayor Steve Nelson objected to changing the tier system because it would penalize large families.

Collins motivation for charging higher rates for bigger water users was to discourage the irrigation of landscaping. It was revealed that 65% of the city's water is used on landscaping.

Cal Water, the company that runs Visalia's water system, is the one in charge of creating the different tiers and that it cannot be amended until 2016.

Right now, Kim Loab, Natural Resource Conservation manager, said that the tiers are not different enough to discourage big users. Councilmember Gubler reminded the council that Visalia just put up a valiant fight last year to keep water rates down and hopes that the council does not go in the other direction.

Councilman Collins was also concerned that the public was not getting the message. He said that when he drove around neighborhoods that people were watering for longer than allowed and not on the correct days.

Mayor Nelson suggested that the city needed to do more to educate the public and to increase the fines for non-compliance.

Gubler disagreed and pointed out that Visalians have been conserving water since the 1990's and successfully cut an additional 10% on top of these conservation efforts.

He also said that the 180 fines levied by the code enforcer showed that Visalians were complying with the ordinance. For those reasons, Gubler was not in favor of changing the watering schedule or increasing the fines.

Right now, Visalia's code enforcer issues a warning to those businesses or residents out of compliance.

The second violation is a $100 fine, third - $200 and the fourth is a $500 fine. Loeb said that only a few $500 fines were levied against out of state commercial landlords.

At the end of the discussion Collins moved that the watering schedule be amended to eliminate the watering days in December, that the fines be raised by 25% and to accept all the ordinance changes outlined in the staff report.

The motion passed 4-1 with Gubler voting no. The staff will be presenting an updated version of the watering schedule and ordinance for the council's review at the next meeting.

Together We Change the Future

North Visalia has been known for poverty, crime, drugs and gang violence but this neighborhood is changing and hope is spreading. Parents at Houston School are joining together to make life better for their children. They are creating Houston Neighborhood park- a safe place where families can exercise, play, and be together. You can join them and together we can change the future of North Visalia.

Houston Elementary School is located in an older, under-resourced neighborhood in Visalia with no parks within walking distance. Visalia Unified School District has agreed to open the school field to the public as a park and continue to maintain the property. A partnership of school parents, school staff, Neighborhood Church, Visalia Unified School District, and Pro-Youth HEART are working together to change this field into a fun neighborhood park. They have planted 38 trees, spread landscaping bark and collected over $76,000 through fundraisers, donations and in-kind gifts but there is still more to do. Another $200,000 is needed to install a walking path, picnic area and playground. Community organizations and businesses are invited to partner in this effort to revitalize our community and invest in hope and a positive future for children. Various sponsorship levels are available.

- Platinum Partner Sponsorship ($10,000) will have their family name or company logo on the park entrance sign and a personalized plaque.
- Gold Partner Sponsorship ($5,000) will receive a table dedicated to their family or company in the picnic area and a personalized plaque.
- Silver Partner Sponsorship ($3,000) will receive a bench dedicated to their family or company in the park and a personalized plaque.
- Bronze Partner Sponsorship ($1,000) will receive a tree dedicated to their family or company in the park and a personalized plaque.
- Neighbor Partner Sponsorship ($100) will receive a plaque dedicated to their family or company on the park's Donor Wall.

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TCAC

Continued from p. 1

against legendary pilot Chuck Yeager. The lawyer who will be presenting the case against Grenseman and Jimenez is Michael Woods, a McCormick Barstow partner with 30 years' experience. It is unknown why the county chose to hire an expensive outside law firm and not use someone from their pool of 20 lawyers usually hired by Tulare County to take on such cases.

Another development in the case is that a defendant, who previously could not be found, has resurfaced. Yessica Ozuna, who quit her job at TCAC right after Jimenez and Grenseman were put under investigation, came forward a few weeks ago. She called Melo and Sarsfield, the plaintiff's law firm, and set up a time and place to be served. The county is representing Ozuna and they have entered/filed a general denial on her behalf. Jimenez is alleging that Ozuna created a fake Facebook page in order to send inflammatory messages about Jimenez and her acquaintances.

It was also reported that, after being interviewed by McCormick Barstow, defendant Shawn Mathis abruptly quit her job. Mathis is suspected of sending harassing letters and making harassing phone calls to and against Jimenez.

More allegations about sexual misconduct by one of the defendants has come to light. Melo and Sarsfield will be using these allegations in their case against the county. Jimenez was accused of exposing her breasts as one of the reasons for her termination. At Jimenez' Employment Development Department trial in January those individuals to which she supposedly exposed herself have signed affidavits stating that the allegations are false.

In the meantime, one of the defendants in the case was known by the county to have engaged in several instances of sexual misconduct, such as oral copulation and unwanted sexual advances to a fellow employee. Melo and Sarsfield will point out in court that the county cannot pick and choose who to fire over sexual misconduct. If Jiminez's actions were deemed so reprehensible as to be fired, than performing oral sex at the work place should be on the county's list of offenses worthy of termination also.

Tulare County and the five current and former county employees named in the suit have entered "denials." Denials are similar to a "not guilty" in a criminal case. Right now both sides are in the discovery phase of the case.

Guest Commentary on Animal Control from Ronald Pierce

Ronald Pierce

The recent coverage of the emerging problems inside Tulare County Animal Control (TCAC) is of public interest, where it resurrects issues significantly impacting county residents--particularly disabled persons relying upon service or support animals.

From the November 20, 2014 *Valley Voice* article, "Tulare County Sued by Former Animal Control Employees":

"In 2013, Animal Control took in 9,000 animals but only adopted out 700, which is well below a 10% survival rate. Within California, Tulare County Animal Control is considered a "kill shelter."

One need not be a mathematician to deduce that nearly all animals taken or otherwise confiscated by TCAC are, in most cases, doomed. Why such a high level of carnage? Under what conditions are animals dying or being killed in TCAC? What is the "chain of custody" of those carcasses? It falls to the public to monitor the policies, practices and procedures of TCAC.

Animal lovers throughout Tulare County may recall the Carcasses-for-Cash scandal of 2007. According to an investigative report by the sheriff's office at that time, Michael Sargeant, William Harmon, and Ron Cookson were arrested in June of 2007 for participating in an "off the books" arrangement where Harmon and Cookson carried out unauthorized mass euthanasia at TCAC – reportedly by nonstandard and painful methods – and then falsified county records to cover their tracks. Sargeant would then purchase the carcasses whenever Harmon notified him of euthanized animals ready for pick up, and then sell them to UC Davis' School of Veterinary Medicine.

In light of facts and recent history, it becomes less a question of why TCAC is killing so many animals, and more a question of how much revenue is possibly being generated from these murders. Assuming a standard price of $2.50 for each carcass, multiplied by 8,300 TCAC carcasses in 2013, the possible revenue from selling carcasses that year could have been well over $20,000. A motive for mass confiscation is not only plausible, but probable; in fact historical for rampant confiscation of any animal TCAC could then get its hands on. A glance at Wendy Jones' case correlates with this concern.

From the January 15, 2015 *Valley Voice* article, "More Trouble at Tulare County Animal Control", TCAC confiscated "Clyde" during an apparent court case, but prior to its resolution, and under questionable authority for doing so.

"Before she received the decision on her appeal, on the morning of January 2, Deputy Young of the Tulare County Sheriff's Department and an off-duty animal control officer in uniform, Chris Carothers, showed up at the kennel to seize her dog, Jones said. The kennel is next door to her home. ... The dog was loaded into the animal control truck and taken to the TCAC facility in Visalia. ... Jones telephoned the Sheriff's Department and asked who was assigned to go the kennel [to] collect Clyde. She was told that nobody was given such an assignment. She also discovered that Carothers was not scheduled to work at TCAC that day."

Jones' concern regarding the deputy and Carothers' legal authority to confiscate "Clyde" is not an isolated one. I met William Fabricius in Tulare County Superior Court back in 2009. I was (and still am) dealing with incredible judicial corruption in my case and met him on the same field. Fabricius, a long-time disabled Navy veteran and resident of southern Tulare County, found himself the target of TCAC shortly after standing up to what he claims is unlawful child support wage garnishment in his family law case in Tulare County Superior Court.

Fabricius, who has never had children, challenged the court's sanctioning of what he says is "child support program fraud" – and found himself immediately targeted, he claims, by County Counsel. Fabricius states he believes that County Counsel utilized TCAC to target him in retaliation for his disfavor with court officials.

"I upset the family court by challenging what appears to be systemic corruption, and like others I've heard about, I found myself targeted by County Counsel. They target you where they can hurt you the most; your loved ones." he stated. "They hit you where you live."

A request by County Counsel for a warrant to confiscate Fabricius' dogs based on allegations that they were "vicious" was authored by Kathleen Taylor, and signed overnight by Judge Valeriano Saucedo, who is currently under investigation for judicial corruption.

Fabricius claims he was targeted twice by TCAC on the same charges, the first occasion in April of 2013 and the second in October of 2013.

Fabricius was handcuffed and forced to sit on a sheriff cruiser bumper in the cold (he claims he later came down with bronchitis from it) while eight dogs were stolen from him. On the second occasion in October, a larger mix of sheriff's deputies and TCAC agents descended on his ranch, this time detaining him without cuffs while they rummaged through his home and outbuildings for nearly two hours.

One of William Fabricius's many dogs. Courtesy Ronald Pierce.

"It was a police state nightmare." he recalls. "The first time, I was handcuffed and forced me to sit on the bumper of one of their cruisers while I watched them prowl through my home and property. The second time they came, they again bullied me and treated my dogs savagely. They were shooting them with tranquilizer darts and dragging them with noose wands. They said they were there to confiscate vicious dogs, but many of my dogs they took were puppies. I mean really? Vicious puppies? And the only time I saw any of my dogs get angry at them was because they were dragging them with noose wands by their throats. My dogs weren't on someone else's property; they were guarding my home. On my land. They've never bitten anyone. They were simply doing what they were supposed to do. Comforting me. TCAC viciously attacked my dogs and then said they were vicious after the fact."

Fabricius felt that not only was TCAC's authority to confiscate his animals falsified, but that he subsequently endured sham hearings by the county before a local lawyer he says rigged the case for TCAC.

"The first thing I did was specially appear and challenge Agnello's jurisdiction, considering he was being paid under Tulare County Agreement No. 7002. I mean the contract makes it obvious he was being paid by the opposing party – Tulare County Animal Control. So it wasn't like I was getting an impartial hearing according to *Haas*." (Referencing *Haas v. County of San Bernardino* (2002)27 Cal.4th 1017, 119 Cal. Rptr.2d 341; 45 P.3d 280)

Interestingly, Fabricius says his first county hearing on November 25, 2013, involved Paul Grenseman, one of two TCAC employees who were suddenly walked off the job around the same time as the hearing, and are now suing Tulare County. Fabricius says he and his witnesses believe County Counsel purposefully acted to prevent Grenseman from testifying

Whether or not his claim of prosecutorial misconduct is true, it would appear to answer the mystery of Grenseman's swift and sudden removal from TCAC, as noted in the November 20, 2014 *Valley Voice* article, "Tulare County Sued by Former Animal Control Employees":

"It is still unknown why the county felt that Grenseman posed such a threat that he needed to be escorted off of county property, especially in light of the fact that, just two months prior, he was considered a model employee."

Others in the community who had been unfairly treated by County Council warned Fabricius about their lawyer's tactics.

"It surprised me at first, but only briefly. I'm fully aware of the things County Counsel has done to others here in Tulare County, such as Pamela Fox of Fox v. Tulare County. I'm aware of the part they played in Ronald Pierce's case. We really haven't progressed at all beyond the days of Tulare County prosecutorial misconduct such as we saw in the Mark Sodersten case. Everyone knows the District Attorney's Office and County Counsel's office are the same animal, no pun intended." Fabricius says. "The judicial corruption in Tulare County

COMMENTARY continued on **9 »**

Barks and Bourbon to Benefit Tulare Animal Shelter

Staff Reports

Friends of Tulare Animal Services is proud to present their first annual fundraiser Barks and Bourbon. The organization was established to support the shelter's efforts to spay, neuter and rescue stray animals. It is a non-profit organization not affiliated with any county or city government.

The Barks and Bourbon event will make its debut on Saturday, May 9, from 5:30 to 10:00pm. The event will be held at the Tulare International Agri-Center, Social Hall, 4500 S. Laspina, Tulare, CA 93274. Funds raised from the event will be used to rescue the shelter animals from the city of Tulare's new animal shelter, Tulare Animal Services. Each year, tens of thousands of unwanted pets are euthanized in Tulare County shelters and at shelters all around the Central Valley. Barks and Bourbon will help many of city of Tulare's pets find a forever home with a second chance at life.

The evening will have a Prohibition theme with heavy hors d'oeuvres, a candy bar and a no-host bar. Activities will include a silent and live auction, a wine grab, bourbon tasting and other activities. All proceeds from the event will be for the purchase of a used cargo van to facilitate their close to weekly rescue transports. As a non-profit foundation, all proceeds will be directed to this specific project. Tickets are $55 per person and may be purchased by contacting Cindee Tenbroeck at Country Club Mortgage, 1120 Leland Ave., Tulare, (559) 303-6930 or Frank Furtaw at 3817 S. "K" Street, Tulare, (559) 358-0030.

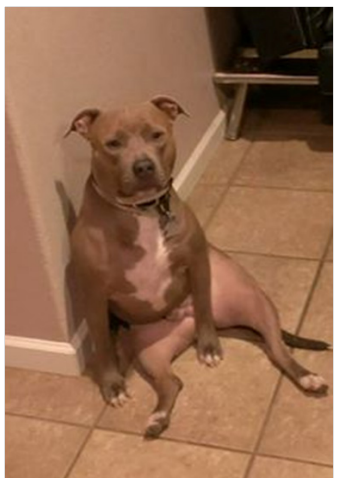
Friends of Tulare Animal Services is solely funded through donations and contributions are fully tax-deductible. Event sponsorships are also available. Donation for items for both of the two auctions are being accepted. Donation of goods, services, gift cards, and/or a gift basket is vital to the success of Barks and Bourbon. Businesses and organizations should include brochures and relevant details about the item they donate, so the event coordinators can include an accurate description for potential bidders.

Tulare Animal Services opened for business in January, 2013. Located in the city of Tulare, the shelter provides sheltering services for residents and contracts with the cities of Exeter and Farmersville. All stray, injured or surrendered animals come to the shelter. Last year, the shelter was able to arrange rescue or adoption for more than 1,000 animals. The public is welcome to the shelter any time during business hours.

The Story of Helo, the Common Brown Pittie

Frank Furtaw and Michelle Gayden

He arrived as a stray and as a large helicopter flew overhead the Animal Control Officer responsible for his intake bestowed upon him the name, Helo. He was a happy boy with a wildly wagging tail with a sweet disposition. Unfortunately, he was a member of a class of dogs often vilified by society and subjected to breed bans.



Due to the fact bully breeds are extremely popular in the Valley, they represent the majority of dogs taken into the Tulare Animal Services. Helo's kind are very hard to adopt or rescue. The harsh reality is the majority of these dogs never make it out of the shelter. Helo's odds were not looking good. His fortune turned around and a gentleman adopted him and he was so thrilled to have a home.

Sadly, by no fault of his own, he was returned. With a defeated spirit, he returned to a kennel in the shelter with the other homeless dogs. His tail still wagged and the staff fell in love with him. Next, he went to a very large adoption event but no one was interested in giving him a home. At this point, weeks had passed and kennel life was taking its toll. His chances of leaving the shelter were dwindling.

His great disposition and temperament never wavered. He sat patiently as prospective adopters and rescue organizations passed him by. At some point, Helo had caught the eye of the shelter manager and a relationship began to form. He was now spending more time outside of the kennel and greeting shelter customers. He was fabulous with everyone; people, small children, other dogs. He was quickly becoming a model citizen.

The shelter manager convinced his wife to give Helo a try. Helo was introduced to who would become his big sister, Madison the Rottweiler, and they got along as if they were old friends. He had found his forever home. He is now spoiled with an overabundance of love and represents his breed well by being a good canine citizen. The shelter is filled with other dogs and cats just waiting for their forever homes.

Commentary

Continued from p. 8

isn't ever going away until the public investigates the civil rights abuses and inbred cronyism pervading local government here. Until then, both the county and its superior court will continue to resemble Ferguson Municipal Court." (Referring to the USDOJ "Pattern and Practice" Report on Ferguson Municipal Court and Police Department in recent news.)

Not surprisingly, he says the judge ruled in favor of TCAC after the November hearing. Fabricius, a veteran living on a fixed income, was then sent a bill for $30,747.14 for impound, boarding and vet bills for his dogs. This bill had to be paid to secure the release and return of his remaining surviving comfort animals. The cost was complicated by the fact that 10 of his dogs had already died at TCAC from parvo, complications from not being fully weaned yet, and attacks from other dogs due to close quartering.

"I'd go into the shelter and whistle for them; try to let them know I was still there – trying to save them. They would answer me in the beginning. Now there's only silence," Fabricius said with heavy sadness.

The dismal fate of Fabricius' dogs is reflected in a transcript of Fabricius' December 18, 2013 hearing, in an examination by Kathleen Taylor of Cecile Shafer, TCAC's contracted veterinarian who claims to "visit the shelter routinely every Saturday to observe the animals that are there and to make sure that there is -- that they're in good general health."

Q. (By MS. TAYLOR) Now, at some point after the -- some of the dogs were taken into the shelter, several of them died; is that right?

A. Yes.

Q. Was there any examination conducted of those animals?

A. Yes. The shelter staff notified me on the 25th that they found one of the young puppies deceased in the kennel, and then I examined them on the 26th. So, that was a Friday they called and told me, and I went out the next day to examine the animals However, on the 29th, two more puppies were found deceased, and those animals were sent to UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine for -- they call it necropsy but it's an autopsy by a boarded pathologist.

Q. And what were the results of that necropsy?

A. The results were that the pathologist determined that the cause of death was Parvo virus, and then the veterinarian went on to describe the changes in the tissues, that the gross or just visualized level down to the cellular level of the changes they saw and what caused the death of the puppies."

Under cross examination by Fabricius:

Q. So, you know, you're testifying that the animals -- they died in custody of the animal shelter?

A. They did.

Fabricius states he believes it was no coincidence the veterinarian involved in his case on behalf of TCAC, who he claims was also being paid by TCAC under Tulare County Agreement No. 7255, is from UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine – the same office involved in the Carcasses-for-Cash scandal back in Tulare 2007.

"I think she (Cecile) wasn't just there to check on dogs. I think she may be a Class B dealer like Michael Sargeant maybe; in any case, my comfort animals were unlawfully stolen from my property, died badly, and ended up at the same university vet school that Michael Sargeant was selling carcasses to. If you ask me, Carcasses-for-Cash is still going strong at Tulare County Animal Shelter."

Like Wendy Jones, Fabricius is challenging what he calls TCAC's "government-organized animal rustling" in Tulare County Superior Court. However, his efforts to secure a straightforward hearing there, he says, have also run into obstacles which he again attributes to County Counsel.

Two of William Fabricius's 'vicious' puppies. Courtesy Ronald Pierce.

"Being an attorney for the county gets the scales of justice tipped in your favor, oftentimes," Fabricius remarks. "And when you consider that the county has a lot of things going on that the general public probably wouldn't take kindly to, you get an environment that favors prosecutorial misconduct. The more you assert your rights and transparency, the more misconduct you experience. It seems like the public really isn't fully aware that government lawyers are just as capable of dirty legal tricks as those in the private sector. In my experience, they get away with it a lot more than private sector attorneys. And the public just accepts everything they do as legitimate. Nothing could be farther from the truth. All the public has to do is actually stop and 'look under the hood' as they say. The real truth is abundant. Don't just take my word for it. There are many people here in Tulare County alone that have been dealing with the same. I mean it's not like it hasn't happened already. Look at what happened to Mark Sodersten."

Considering the alarming rise in animal deaths at TCAC, it's history of scandal, and the increasingly questionable acts coming to light, another investigation needs must be done to determine whether or not TCAC has returned to its previous animal trafficking.

Put somewhere between the Tulare County Sheriff's "Gun-Raffle" debacle which Fabricius says he also fell prey to, the recent courthouse scandal centered around Judge Saucedo, the child porn scandal of the Porterville Fire Department, and the illuminating case of Fox v. County of Tulare – the picture painted is one of disturbingly corrupt Tulare County governance.

Editor's note - "According to a former TCAC manager who had witnessed part of what was described above, and was sympathetic to Bill Fabricius' plight, TCAC and County Council had plausible cause to do what they did. The underlining problem in this case, the Wendy Jones case, and potentially others is that the Tulare County Animal Control Ordinance used for the plausible cause is poorly written and woefully insufficient. The poorly written ordinance opens up the opportunity for abuse by other arms of the government. The former TCAC employee feels that all of Fabricious' dogs have been euthanized."

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Farmers

Continued from p. 1

Farmers who buy water from the CVP system said the continued cutoff will require them to cut production and make other difficult choices.

Kings County farmer Tony Azevedo said he faces a double whammy: Two-thirds of his land is served by the CVP and one-third gets supplies from the Kings River system through storage in Pine Flat Reservoir, which currently stands at about 30 percent of historical average.

"I'm cutting planted acres by 40 percent, which is all row-crop land," Azevedo said. "We're not growing any cantaloupes this year—the first time in more than 42 years we haven't planted that crop. And we won't grow beans. We'll grow less garlic, onions and tomatoes. We're just trying to keep our pistachio and almond trees alive."

He said last year he couldn't get through the growing season with the zero water allocation because of well failure late in the season.

"That's why we're farming fewer acres this year," he said. "We're not going to drill any more wells. We're going to try and get by with what we have. I bought some surface water for this year, but it cost $1,500 an acre-foot. I'll get it about July and August at the peak time for the nut crops."

Azevedo said he has "run out of options."

"My biggest concern is our employees and their families," he said. "We're a strong ag region and, if we can't keep farming going in this area, everything gets shut down."

Like other farmers in the CVP service area, Tulare County farmer Vincent Sola said water shortages mean more farmland is being idled.

"We'll be relying 100 percent on groundwater just to survive," Sola said. "Without surface water to replenish the groundwater, we'll have to be creative if we want to make a crop, but it's hard."

Sola said he hopes his wells will provide enough water to avoid the need to "push over any permanent plantings," such as his almond trees. His farm also grows wheat, corn and alfalfa.

"To keep our permanent crops alive, we'll probably start by eliminating alfalfa," he said, "but dairy farmers in our area depend on the crop to feed their animals. It's a vicious circle."

Rod Radke, a citrus grower in Sanger, said so far his farm has managed to find enough water one way or another to keep going, but noted "the coming season will be harder, with wells going dry and the problems of moving water around to pick up the slack. There's no relief in sight."

> *"We'll be relying 100 percent on groundwater just to survive. Without surface water to replenish the groundwater, we'll have to be creative if we want to make a crop, but it's hard."*
>
> Vincent Sola, a Tulare County farmer.

Late-February storms gave San Joaquin Valley farmers a bit of a break, he said, but there wasn't enough moisture to recharge the groundwater.

"We're basically looking at beginning (the 2016) crop without water, and a lot of our future depends on how well we can maneuver water around," Radke said. "In our case, we're looking at a situation where there's no surface water available. We're not prepared to start knocking over trees just yet, but that could come."

Tulare County dairy farmer Tom Barcellos said he fallowed 25 percent of his cropland last year because of water shortages.

This year, he said, the total will likely be 50 percent or more.

"We carried feed for our dairy cows over and didn't sell any feed last year," he said. "With a zero water allocation from the CVP, the entire east side of the San Joaquin Valley won't have any water, and without water in the surface ditches, the groundwater won't be replenished."

Barcellos, a Lower Tule Irrigation District director, said, "We're all going to be taxed to our fullest extent. There is no water supply. That's the issue. I have an irrigation ditch that runs by my property and it hasn't had water in it for two-and-a-half years. What a lot of people don't understand is that zero is zero."

Farmers have been using creativity to obtain water and move it to where it's needed, said consulting engineer Dennis Keller, whose company facilitates private water exchanges and transfers in the San Joaquin Valley.

Keller said some people have a little water that doesn't come from the projects, typically from pre-1914 water or banked water in certain locations, and "our job is to figure out how to get it to where it will be put to its best and highest use."

In some cases, private water supply agreements involve moving water long distances through a variety of privately and publicly owned infrastructure, most not designed for intermittent uses.

Keller said the transfers require complicated agreements and contracts, as well as various forms of compensation.

"A lot of people are tapped out, their savings accounts are gone, their parents' savings accounts are gone, they've gotten jobs in town just to pay the taxes on the land," he said. "Some are pulling crops this year and hoping things improve so they can go back to farming in the future."

In his 44 years of experience, Keller said, "I've never seen anything like it."

CFBF President Wenger noted ongoing conflicts in water management, specifically about how much water is repeatedly dedicated to protection of fish and wildlife at the expense of jobs and food production for people.

"When every drop of water is more precious than ever, we must improve our ability to store storm flows when we can," he said. "People have real frustration about bureaucratic decisions that send excess water out to sea beyond what's needed for the ecosystem and delta water quality, when that water could be stored for later use, both by people and in the environment."

Wenger said the continued drought lends urgency to the current process of allocating money to be invested from Proposition 1, the water bond approved by California voters last November.

He also called on Congress to move quickly "to provide relief from rigid environmental laws that have failed to balance species protections with human needs."

This article provided by the California Farm Bureau Federation.

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Conspiracy Speaker Speaks to Small Gathering at Private Residence

Guest Commentary Roy J Kendall

On March 7, Christopher Bollyn spoke at a private residence presenting his theory behind the destruction of the World Trade Center in September of 2001. The one-hour presentation was well received by 16 guests and followed by a question and answer session.

Before coming to Visalia, Bollyn was scheduled to give a guest lecture at Sonoma State University in Dr. Phillips' course, Sociology of Conspiracies. Dr. Phillips, one of the founders of Project Censored, suddenly cancelled the event without explaining why.

Christopher Bollyn

Bollyn states in his book and presentation, "The strongest evidence that 9-11 was an inside job comes from the tons of highly sophisticated, military grade nano-thermites that were found in the rubble immediately following the 9-11 attacks. This information was published in 2009 in a credible, peer-reviewed, scientific journal (the name of the paper is: Active Thermitic Material Discovered in Dust from the 9/11 World Trade Center Catastrophe) and has not been refuted by anyone in the scientific community - or anyone else for that matter - since. ..."

According to Christopher Bollyn's book, "Solving 9-11: The Deception That Changed the World" it is "an independent analysis of the events of September 11, 2001. It includes historical and geo-political background and examines the motivation of the people who played key roles in the destruction of the evidence and the obstruction of justice for the families of the victims."

According to Bollyn's website, he is an American journalist who has investigated the events of 9-11. He helped Professor Steven E. Jones in the spring and summer of 2006, when Jones found solid evidence of Thermite in the dust of the Twin Towers. The discovery and discussion of thermite in the demolition of the World Trade Center led to serious trouble for both Jones and Bollyn.

In August 2006, Bollyn said he was attacked at his home in Hoffman Estates, Illinois, by a heavily-armed three-man team of undercover police that had been prowling around his house for several days in a row. The result of the police assault on Bollyn was that he was falsely charged with assault and resisting arrest; both misdemeanor charges. He pled innocent and went through a four-day trial in which the police openly lied and presented false evidence. Bollyn's evidence, on the other hand, was not allowed to be presented and his expert witness was not allowed to testify. After the seriously flawed trial, Bollyn was found guilty of both charges and faced sentencing from the same judge who had overseen the trial.

Rather than submitting themselves to injustice the Bollyn family left their home near Chicago and moved to Europe in June 2007. He then wrote a set of books based on his 9-11 research entitled Solving 9-11: The Deception that Changed the World.

DISCLAIMER: THE VIEWS PRESENTED BY THE SPEAKER IN THIS ARTICLE ARE NOT THE VIEWS OR BELIEFS OF THE VALLEY VOICE, OR ITS STAFF.

Tulare County Association of Realtors Gives Back

Catherine Doe

The Tulare County Association of Realtors (TCAR) came out with Self-Help Enterprises on Wednesday, March 11 to help 12 Tulare families build their own homes. Self-Help Enterprises is a community development organization working together with low-income families to build and sustain healthy communities. The organization selected 12 families to participate in their Tulare project.

Self-Help Enterprises has a long-term working relationship with the City of Tulare. When the latest 12 homes are completed, it will make a total of 138 homes built in Tulare since the first Self-Help houses were constructed there in 1975.

A total of 65 realtors showed up on to help build the homes. Scott Ellis, president of the association, said that the realtors love giving back to the community, especially when it involves helping people achieve the dream of home ownership. He said that the association has about 800 realtors and many of them are involved in nonprofits that are active in the community.

This is the second Self-Help project that TCAR has helped build. Last year a group of realtors volunteered for the day at the Goshen housing development next to Peter Malloch Park. Ellis said that it was such a success that the realtors wanted to do it again this year in Tulare. Working to build Self-Help homes will now become a yearly event for the realtor association.

The families chosen to participate normally can't qualify for a traditional mortgage but have a strong desire for home ownership. To participate in the Self-Help program they had to assist in the construction of all 12 of the homes. Construction is taking place on the corner of North "E" St. and West Gail Ave. in Tulare, across the street from Los Tules Middle School. Construction was started in September of last year and is about halfway done. The homes already had their walls and foundations and are expected to be finished in June.

According to Tom Collishaw, president of Self-Help Enterprises, the families exchange their labor for the down payment of their home, usually the main stumbling block for most working families. Financing is provided by Kings Mortgage through the Fair Housing Administration. Many times the families who participate in a Self-Help project find that their new mortgage for these three- and four-bedroom detached homes is cheaper than the rent on their apartment. The Tulare families will be paying approximately $600 to $850 a month. Self-Help Enterprises can also provide a second mortgage at 4 percent interest that is not due until the family sells their home.

Photo courtesy Tulare County Association of Realtors.

In a Self-Help project, before construction begins, the families make a commitment to each other. They work on all of the houses, and no one moves in until every house is finished. The single-family, energy-efficient homes are all built under the mutual self-help method of construction, with homeowners providing more than 70 percent of the construction labor. Families and volunteers do such construction tasks as basic electrical, foundation, framing, roofing, planting and painting. There is always an on-site construction supervisor and crew to train the volunteers and help build the houses.

Self-Help Enterprises is a home-grown, Central Valley non-profit organization. Much of the funding comes from the United States Department of Agriculture for communities smaller than 25,000 people, such as Goshen or Orosi. Self-Help has to find other sources of funding when building in the larger towns of Tulare or Visalia.

Since 1965, Self-Help Enterprises has helped more than 6,100 families in the San Joaquin Valley build their own homes and participate in the American dream of homeownership. Self-Help Enterprises' emphasis on sustainable homeownership, combined with counseling and education, an affordable mortgage, and "sweat equity" down payment has resulted in successful homeownership for thousands of San Joaquin Valley families.

Coach White of "McFarland USA" to Participate in London's 5k Race.

Catherine Doe

Trying to change the image of the small community of London is the mission of Robert Isquierdo and the community's residents. Many people who live in Tulare County don't even realize that a London, California exists, but that is all about to change. London's Second Annual 5k Run to raise funds for the community library takes place Saturday, March 28.

Isquierdo was so inspired by the recently released movie, "McFarland USA," that he reached out to Jim White, the coach portrayed in the movie. Coach White's long distance running team won nine state titles from 1987 to 2001.

"I contacted Jim White's wife, Cheryl," Isquierdo said. "I shared my story with her and she replied asking for more information. She then replied with her home number, and Jim and I spoke for an hour about faith and the similarities between McFarland and London. After that conversation he checked his calendar and agreed to join us for our 5k event."

The day of the race at 8:30 am the legendary McFarland coach will give a pre-race presentation. Many of the former runners who inspired the movie McFarland USA will be participating in the 5k race. They include: four-time state championship team member Rudy Cavasos, two-time individual state back-to-back champion Galvin Angel Gonzalez, and state championship team member Giovanni Perezchica.

Afterward Coach White will hand out trophies to the winners in each category. There will also be a kid's 1k fun run and a post-race festival with food, music, kids games and raffle.

To register visit www.signmeup.com/site/online-eventregistration/106129 or visit Sole 2 Soul at 4241 S. Mooney Blvd in Visalia. For additional information go to www.libraryforlondon.com. Adults are $20, kids, $10 for the 5k, and Kids 1K fun run is also $10. This is a great opportunity to experience London firsthand and witness the positive changes happening in this community.

Work on London's library is slowly becoming a reality and completion of the library is projected to be September of this year. On February 17th, the Library for London Project committee, attended by Tulare County Supervisor Steve Worthley, updated the community on their progress. A derelict building at the future site of the library was demolished and cleared in anticipation of the construction of the cement foundation. The site is owned by Tulare County and is being donated to London for use their library.

The building for the library is a portable classroom that was donated by Dinuba public schools. The bungalow used to be on the Jefferson elementary campus and was transported to storage. When the foundation is completed the bungalow will be transported to the property. The London Library has already been incorporated into the Tulare County Library system and will be receiving a new set of books to fill their shelves.

For more information about the 5k run or London Library Project call Rob Isquierdo Jr., Library for London Founder at 818 482-8140.

Visalia Music School for All Ages

The Visalia Music School, VMS, offers all levels of classes, from beginners to advanced. Students have the opportunity to perform in the School of Pop, Rock and Blues classes and play in a band. Music classes are lead by well-known local musicians, Dan Michaels, Felix Blanco, and Chris Hancock.

Monday 6-8pm is for teens who play a variety of instruments.

Monday 6-8pm is for teens who play a variety of instruments such as guitar, bass, piano, drums and includes vocals. A few of the songs this age group is learning are Roar, All About That Bass, Stay With Me, Sugar and Back in Black. The teens are planning to perform at the Three River's Music Festival in May. Tuesday night is also available for teens from 6-8pm.

Thursday night is for grades 3rd through 8th. This younger group was featured on the VMS St Patrick's Day float last Saturday, March 14th. Some of the standouts were young drummers, guitarists and vocals.

The other nights are assigned on an as-needed basis depending on who signs up for the classes. One possibility is to form a middle-aged "school of rockers" of both men and women who love remembering, singing and performing their favorite songs.

Dan Michaels builds fun and education right into the music lessons, incorporating a light show and fog machine into the teens' performances. Recordings of their sessions are available for an extra fee. The school's engineer is available for consultation.

The innovative nature of this program affords both children and adults the opportunity to literally, "rock n' roll," the night away. For information of this program, call the Visalia Music School, VMS, at (559)627-9500 or email at musicschool@live.com. The school is located at 2332 W. Whitendale Blvd.

Briefly...

SOCIAL SERVICES TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL (SSTAC) ANNOUNCES VACANCIES

The Social Services Transportation Advisory Council is a council that must be in place under state law to review specific public transit issues in Tulare County. The applicable law is called the Transportation Development Act (TDA). The primary focus of the committee is to focus on the annual Unmet Transit Needs process.

Each spring, TCAG, as the local transportation planning agency, holds hearings and solicits comments from residents all over Tulare County regarding their transit needs. The SSTAC will review the comments and requests that are deemed to be unmet transit needs and, using defined criteria, determine whether the request is reasonable to meet, or not reasonable to meet. An example of criteria used is the level of demand, or how many riders may ride the bus where a person requests service. If only a few people live in the area where the route is requested, for example, that would not be cost-effective and would not be a reasonable provision of public transit. Adding a stop at a local hospital, as another example, may be deemed a reasonable to meet transit request.

The determinations of the SSTAC are brought to the TCAG Board annually, and those transit requests approved by the TCAG Board as Unmet Needs Reasonable to meet must be implemented by applicable transit providers for those providers to receive certain state funds.

The council meets three to four times per year, typically in the morning on a Tuesday.

The SSTAC currently has three vacancies, as follows:

1. Representative of a potential transit user from local youth (18-25).
2. Representative of a potential transit user who is disabled.
3. Representative of a local social service provider for seniors.

Anyone interested in serving on the SSTAC, should complete an application, including any comments or additional information in the section provided at the end, and return it to Andrea Apolinario, Tulare County Associations of Governments (TCAG) Attn: Andrea Apolinario 210 N. Church St., Suite B Visalia, CA 93291 or AApolinario@tularecog.org . For more information, call (559) 623-0450

FARM CREDIT WEST PAYS BORROWERS $57 MILLION IN PATRONAGE DIVIDENDS

Farm Credit West, ACA, the nation's fourth largest agricultural lending cooperative, announced that it will pay a record $57 million in patronage distributions to more than 4,400 farmers, ranchers and agribusinesses in California and Nevada. The Board of Directors set the distribution at 75 basis points (0.75%) relative to the average volume of eligible loan and lease assets. Paid entirely in cash, this patronage payment translates to a 75 basis point reduction in customer-owner's effective interest rate paid during 2014.

As owners of a financial cooperative, Farm Credit West's customers have the opportunity to share in the financial success of the cooperative through patronage distributions. Farm Credit West's patronage program has paid $362 million since the program's inception in 2002. Customers can expect to receive their distribution in late February 2015.

"The ongoing success of Farm Credit West is attributed to our 'customer comes first' model, growth in agricultural lending and on our continued focus on maintaining a highly efficient operation," said Mark Littlefield, CEO of Farm Credit West. "Our patronage program reflects the financial strength of Farm Credit West and in-turn our customers receive a cash advantage."

WHCC COMMUNITY EDUCATION OFFERS GED PREPARATION CLASSES

West Hills Community College Coalinga will be offering a series of five intensive GED test preparation courses, with the first course having begun on March 9.

Courses offered deal with reading, writing, social science, science and mathematics and will prepare course attendees to deal with the GED test.

The first course, dealing with reading, runs until April 1.

A course on writing will run from April 6 to May 1, a course on social science from May 4 to May 29, a course on science from June 1 to July 3 and on math from July 6 to July 31. Each course will meet Tuesdays and Thursdays on the WHCC campus from 5 pm. to 6:30 p.m.

Each course costs $75, with an overall cost of $375 for all five courses.

The courses are offered as part of the WHCC community education program which focuses on offering affordable, diverse learning opportunities to the public. The courses are open to the community and not restricted to current WHCC students.

The program has also offered courses on topics including adult literacy, ESL for the workplace, and fitness.

For more information, contact Angela Eldridge at (559) 934-2221 or angelaeldridge@whccd.edu.

CALIFORNIANS AGAINST FRACKING RESPONDS TO SENATE OVERSIGHT HEARING ON CALIFORNIA OIL INDUSTRY REGULATION

Californians Against Fracking released the following statement on the conclusion of the March 10 Senate Oversight Hearing on California oil regulators' failure to protect groundwater from oil industry pollution.

"The ongoing contamination of California's drinking and irrigation water with toxic oil industry waste fluids is yet another example of why oil companies can't be trusted to operate while ensuring the protection of our communities' health and the environment," Dan Jacobson, State director of Environment California said on behalf of Californians Against Fracking.

"Years of negligence by state regulators as oil companies have ramped up the use of dangerous methods like fracking have compromised our most precious resource—water. All illegal injection wells need to be shut down immediately to stop the ongoing damage and Gov. Brown needs to put a system in place to ensure regulators are enforcing laws meant to protect our water and health. Allowing more fracking and other new techniques will compound this crisis. That's why more than 150 groups have petitioned Gov. Brown for an immediate halt to fracking and other dangerous oil development."

At the hearing, state oil regulators also admitted that they allow cyclic steam injection to routinely occur at pressures high enough to crack the formation, in violation of state and federal law.

The state's top water regulator also confirmed that drinking water aquifers have been contaminated with oil industry waste fluid. In addition, while some limited testing of nearby water wells has been conducted, that the state lacks complete information on water wells and so cannot guarantee that all at-risk water wells have even been located.

DO YOU NEED HELP WITH FILLING OUT YOUR TAX FORM?

Senator Andy Vidak invites anyone to a FREE Tax Preparation Services event with qualified volunteers on Saturday, April 11, between 10am and 2pm, at the Kings Community Action Organization office, 1130 North 11th Avenue in Hanford. The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program helps taxpayers with annual incomes of $53,000 or less who need help filling out their annual tax forms.

An appointment is required. If you qualify and would like this free service, call Savino Perico at (559) 904-8854 or email sperico@kcao.org to make an appointment.

CHECK LIST

A volunteer tax preparer will require the following information:

- Valid photo ID
- Social Security card (SSI) or Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) for all family members
- All W-2s, 1098s and 1099s (if any)
- Copy of the prior year's tax return
- Other income/expense information
- Total expenses paid for child/day care
- Bank account and routing number for direct deposit of refund or direct debit for balance due
- Total tuition fees and expenses
- Day care provider's identifying number
- Landlord's name, address and phone number for the CA Renter's Credit

This event is co-hosted by California State Controller Betty Yee, Senator Andy Vidak, Assemblymember Rudy Salas, Kings Community Action Organization and Kings County United Way.

PC LOOKING FOR SUMMER AND FALL COMMUNITY EDUCATION INSTRUCTORS

Porterville College is looking for instructors for summer and fall semester Community Education courses.

Community Education courses are designed to meet the needs of the community. These are non-credit classes offered in addition to the college's academic program. These courses are designed to provide learning and enjoyment in a friendly, worry-free environment. These courses include vocational skills, professional development or exposure to new recreational enjoyments.

Porterville College strives to create and offer a variety of exciting courses that are of interest to the community it serves. Community Education Courses are not funded by taxpayers' dollars. All registration fees and costs associated with the courses vary from course to course.

Anyone interested in developing and teaching a Community Education Course, should complete and return the Class Proposal Form, which can be found online at www.portervillecollege.edu/community-education/community-ed-classes.

For more information, contact Kailani Knutson at (559) 791-2294 or kknutson@portervillecollege.edu.

COS INVITES THE COMMUNITY TO A WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH EVENT

In the spirit of Women's History Month, College of the Sequoias invites the community to a presentation of local women in leadership, March 25 at 6pm, on the Visalia COS campus. The event is free to the public. It will be held in the Ponderosa building, at 915 S. Mooney Blvd.

Each presenter will discuss her career experience and leadership roles as an elected official. COS welcomes presenters: Amy Shuklian, Visalia City councilwoman and former Mayor for the City of Visalia; Virginia R. Gurrola, Porterville City councilwoman and former Mayor for the City of Porterville; Nicole Parra, California State assemblywoman (2002 to 2008) from Hanford.

PORTERVILLE COLLEGE WATER DRIVE

Porterville College ASPC (Associated Students of Porterville College) will be hosting a special water drive, in conjunction with Bakersfield College and College of the Sequoias campuses and local churches (First Assembly of God and Abundant Harvest) from 9 to 5pm on Friday, March 20. The drive will benefit the many residents of East Porterville whose wells have run dry. Water can be dropped off during the event at Porterville College's Jamison Stadium parking lot (off Main and College Avenue) or prior to the event at the Porterville College ASPC office. Porterville College is located at 100 East College Avenue, in Porterville. For more information call ASPC at (559) 791-2325.

VICE MAYOR WARREN GUBLER HOSTS 'DONUTS AND DISCUSSION'

Enjoy Donuts and Discussion with Vice Mayor Warren Gubler and Police Chief Jason Salazar at Maverick's Roasting Co., from 7 to 8:30 am Saturday, April 18 at 238 E. Caldwell Ave.

This informal gathering allows any citizen to address their concerns or ask questions one-on-one with Vice Mayor Gubler. Police Chief Jason Salazar will be available to answer questions related to public safety.

Democrats

Continued from p. 1

event organizers. Event planning was well underway before the TCDCC's objections were raised, and the committee was aware of its previous fund-raising efforts, she said.

"We've done things in the past. There have been no steps to follow, so we started planning," Solis said. "We had never heard of that code (Election Code 20201, as cited in the TCDCC's statement). The (California Democratic Party) said that's not practiced."

Once TCDCC's objections were raised, the VDC made a formal request for sanction for its event.

"The event was initially to be sponsored by the Visalia Democrat Club," said VDC vice president Susanne Gundy. "The Central Committee declined to endorse it."

Demands issued

Cease-and-desist letters were issued to the organizers and sponsors of the event by the TCDCC, demanding the removal of any reference to the Democratic Party or its sponsorship. The objections were also forwarded to State Treasurer John Chiang, who was to be the event's keynote speaker.

"They contacted Chiang and raised a fuss about it," said Gundy. "Unfortunately, the damage was done. Treasurer Chiang said he couldn't attend. He (Macareno) essentially told the Treasurer not to come."

Solis said Chiang's office told her he did not wish to appear at the event because of any possible fallout.

"The Treasurer was worried about what would happen," she said. "I was not surprised when I got the letter that said he would not come."

The Roosevelt Gala, however, will go on. It is now planned as a fund-raiser for the newly-formed Tulare County Political Action Committee, a move made to avoid the possibility of any illegal use of the term "Democrat", said Solis, who also heads the TCPAC.

"It may well be the VDC has every right to hold this event," she said. "We thought we'd be on the safe side."

'Rogue' Democrats

The TCDCC continues to maintain the fund-raiser is illegal, saying creation of the "fly-by-night" TCPAC is intended to subvert the Election Code requirements. In the TCDCC's statement, Macareno refers to the event organizers as "a rogue group of people misleading citizens," who are undermining the TCDCC's ability to fund-raise.

"We have rules and regulations when it comes to political activities," Macareno is quoted as saying in the TCDCC's statement. "Despite the formation of this group's PAC's supposedly nonpartisan status, it is a vehicle that these individuals are using under the name of TCDCC's unchartered Visalia Democratic Club."

The disquiet among the party leadership is the result of "years of hurt feelings," said Solis.

The VDC, which was until this year chartered by the TCDCC, was not granted official status in 2015. Gundy, who is also secretary of the Tulare Democratic Club and a former member of the TCDCC, said the TDC and the Young Democrats Club at the College of the Sequoias have also become embroiled in the controversy because of loyalty clauses the TCDCC required the three clubs to add to their bylaws, which they rejected.

"That language included kicking out any member that supported a non-Democratic candidate. It was very vague," Solis said. "We felt a huge lack of communication from the chairman (Macareno). We felt like this committee wants to block other clubs from raising funds and being active."

Gundy agreed with that sentiment.

"It's not like we're renegade Democrats," she said. "The Central Committee seems to want to keep its finances close to its chest."

Macareno, however, said the requirement was clear and not as demanding as described by detractors.

"We did make a charter revision that stated that during the election clubs have no non-Democratic candidates speak with the clubs," he said. "We did tell these clubs if they wanted these candidates to speak, just hit the gavel (to adjourn the meeting)."

Hope for 'true election'

Gundy also raised questions about how some members of the TCDCC gained their seats. While the positions are intended to be filled by a vote of party members, many of the seats have been filled by appointment due to a lack of candidates, she said. The next ballot for TCDCC membership will take place in 2016.

"We're hoping we can have a true election, so people can vote for their committee," Gundy said. "It's sort of a sad situation, and it's making our neighboring committees uncomfortable and the Democratic Party uncomfortable."

The TCDCC now considers the VDC "an unsanctioned organization." The VDC has since been sanctioned by the Kings County Democratic Central Committee, but will not lend its name to the Roosevelt Gala.

Despite that move, the TCDCC is still objecting to the event.

"He (Macareno) is still adamant. He sent letters to people who only posted on my Facebook," Solis said. "It seems like he wants to threaten anyone who wants to attend our event."

Solis said Macareno sent an email to many of the VDC's members, stating the TCDCC would take over operation of the VDC.

"He said he would take over the club," Solis said. "We'll be reassuring our members we've done everything right."

A timeline of events surrounding the controversy will be mailed to the VDC membership this week, she said.

State-level reaction

Questions have also been raised at the state party level about changes to the TCDCC's bylaws and the removal of some of its members, said Doug Kessler, a regional director for the California Democratic Party and a member of the VDC. Kessler's region does not include Tulare County.

"For whatever reason, the TCDCC has decided to do some very strange things. It's clearly led by Ruben (Macareno) and made some strange changes to the bylaws. He wants total loyalty and started kicking people off," Kessler said. "It was a big, huge change, and pretty unreasonable."

The state party has little control over the local central committees, Kessler said, however they are looking into the recent changes that have been made to TCDCC's bylaws. The results of that investigation will be released shortly, he said.

"The state party doesn't have much they can do to them. They're an elected body unto themselves," Kessler said. "We can say, 'You're acting stupidly or breaking the law.'"

Macareno is adamant the TCDCC's bylaws have not been changed and that the state-level review only took place because members of the TCDCC who were removed called for the investigation.

"There were never any changes. The bylaws are as they were," he said. "There are some issues with individuals being removed. It's being reviewed, so I can't comment on it."

Lack of support

The divisive issues are not limited to finances and loyalty. Members of the various Democratic clubs feel the TCDCC has not done enough to promote party candidates locally, said Gundy, who feels the disquiet began there.

"The issue started essentially last year when the clubs wanted to have a booth at the Fair. The Central Committee said, 'No, we're not going to sponsor a booth.' The clubs pooled their money and got a booth," she said. "It came to a head. The clubs felt the Central Committee wasn't doing all it could to support candidates."

Following that, local Democrats decided to form the TCPAC to fund their efforts for increased voter turnout, registration and education. The Roosevelt Gala, though originally sponsored by the VDC, was given over to the TCPAC following the TCDCC's objections. Increasing local participation in politics remains the two groups' main goals, Solis said.

"The Roosevelt Gala came from that idea," she said. "This would be the first big fund-raiser."

Macareno said he believes the conflict stems from a lack of understanding of what the TCDCC can do to support candidates, one he called a "newbie standpoint." He specifically cited Solis's lack of previous involvement with local Democratic organizations, and said there was also a certain amount of personal upset following the failed congressional campaign of Susanne Aguilera-Marrero, who sought more financial and logistical support for her campaign than the TCDCC could provide.

"Apparently, that wasn't enough," Macareno said of the TCDCC's efforts to support the campaign. "These are individuals who are upset with the turnout in general."

Personality conflicts

Both sides of the disagreement agree the issue has taken on a personal note that has spilled into control of the party's apparatus.

"It's a matter of personalities," said Gundy. "The TCDCC only, it seems, wants to restrict fund-raising to itself."

Macareno agrees.

"I think it is more personality than party politics," he said. "That's beyond my control."

A replacement for Chiang as keynote speaker is being sought, and the event will still focus on honoring the work of local Democratic notables Loli Moheno and Joe Altschule.

"We're actively seeking a new speaker," said Gundy. "We'll have one in a couple of days."

The inaugural Roosevelt Gala is scheduled for Saturday, March 28 at the Visalia Convention Center.

TCDCC Press Release

The Tulare County Democratic Party sent "cease" and "desist" letters to individuals who have been fundraising in the county under the Democratic umbrella without the authorization of the Tulare County Democratic Central Committee (TCDCC). The organizers of the Inaugural Roosevelt Gala set for March 28 at the Visalia Convention Center were sent letters demanding those individuals to discontinue the use of its Visalia Democratic Club (VDC) name, or the use of Democrat or Democratic in any name to promote and or solicit for that event or any other event.

The TCDCC Executive Committee claims the organizers recently established the Tulare County Political Action Committee (PAC) to dodge state law that requires local approval for the March 28 event. In the March newsletter of the Tulare Kings Hispanic Chamber of Commerce it states, "The Inaugural Roosevelt Gala is the first fundraiser conducted under the auspices of the Visalia Democratic Club's newly formed PAC." The newsletter also identifies former Congressional candidate Suzanna Aguilera-Marrero as a co-sponsor.

The organizers are in violation of state law which states that the only local entity to authorize a political fundraising event or activity for any party is the county's party's central committee. TCDCC reserves the right to fund raise to its chartered clubs, organizations and or individuals the committee works with. Furthermore the club, an established arm of the TCDCC, is currently being misused as the TCDCC considers it an unsanctioned organization until proper required documentation is submitted.

"The individuals we contacted via email, US Mail and those that support this activity have a disregard for what the state law mandates. We cannot have a rogue group of people misleading citizens, particularly Democrats, in regards to their unauthorized fundraising efforts," said Democratic county chair Ruben Macareno. "We have rules and regulations to follow when it comes to political activities. Despite the formation of this group's PAC's supposedly non-partisan status, it is a vehicle that these individuals are using under the the name of TCDCC's unchartered Visalia Democratic Club."

Macareno is referring to Election Code 20201 which state, "It is unlawful for any person that includes in any part of its name the name of any political party to directly or indirectly solicit funds for any purpose whatsoever upon the representation either express or implied that the funds are being solicited for the use of that political party unless that person shall have previously obtained the written consent." Macareno says that there was no authorization or credentials granted for that event or any other. In addition to being a civil wrong, such actions are also a misdemeanor pursuant to Elections Codes Section 18360.

The organizer's $75 a plate "inaugural" Roosevelt dinner features keynote speaker State Treasurer John Chiang, a Democrat; honorees attorney and newspaper columnist Joe Altschule and former county supervisor Lali Moheno.

Viewpoint

Tulare County Appeals PERB Ruling

Kermit Wullschleger

Does it surprise anyone that Tulare County has decided to appeal the ruling made last month in favor of SEIU Local 521 and its Tulare County Employees? A Resounding NO!

Greg Gomez, Tulare County Chapter President of SEIU Local 521 stated the following on March 15:

"At the same time the Tulare County Board of Supervisors (BOS) meeting was held on 03/10/2015 the BOS complained about spending money to provide water service to their own constituents, later that same day they voted to spend money to appeal the decision of the Public Employees Relation Board (PERB) to pay back about 1000 employees that were denied step and merit pay from years ago. It appears the BOS is trying to weasel their way of their contractual obligation with respect to the 2009-2011 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The real loser here are the taxpayers of Tulare County as interest keeps building up on the $4 million that PERB says is owed the employees. Now the BOS has no problem spending the additional attorney fees that are needed to continue to file appeals."

In 2011 Tulare County wrongfully denied step and merit pay increases to about 1,000 county workers. On or about August of 2011 Tulare County imposed a contract that the employees union (SEIU) didn't agree with when the county refused to honor the MOU for 2009-2011. Tulare County refused to reset new employees to the merit and step increases they had previously agreed to.

To set the record straight, it is the Jean Rousseau, Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) and BOS that seek to sue represented employees last year because they dare to question this CAO and BOS. This is a county where the BOS and the CAO have a unique relationship. The BOS votes to give the CAO over a 10 percent raise (at a time according to the CAO and the BOS Tulare County is going through difficult economic times). CAO Rousseau in turn recommends and finds a method to give BOS members raises of over three times as much as most county employees received over the last five to six years. Rousseau and BOS apparently feel that their life insurance policies need to be $250,000, which is 25 times that of most county employees. Rousseau and the BOS feel it is okay to provide Kaweah Delta Hospital with a contribution perhaps as high as $500,000, when last year this same BOS went for months advising their negotiators to offer a zero percent increase when thousands of employees had not seen a raise in five to six years.

In conclusion, we continue to have a BOS and a CAO that have decided to file an appeal rather than to pay money owed to several hundred employees, their own constituents! Perhaps they do so because they have a false belief system that they are always right, even when they are wrong. They don't mind having Tulare County taxpayers pay thousands of dollars in additional attorney fees to appeal the PERB decision. They don't mind paying additional interest owed on the money that was always owed to county employees. At this point the decision is at approximately $4 million. What will that dollar amount increase to with interest set by PERB at seven percent and after a lengthy court appeal?

These are the kinds of decisions hurt our community.

Kermit Wullschleger is a 25-year Tulare County employee and member of the public employee's negotiating team.

Questioning the Second Amendment

Kenneth Roberts

I have a few questions for those who, including some members of the Supreme Court, honestly believe that the Second Amendment was written (10 years after the end of the Revolutionary War) to give the people the right to own and carry guns in our neighborhoods, at public events, and in public places.

1. Why, if the writers wanted to mean "own," do they use the word "keep" in the amendment?

2. and why the word arms if they meant guns—are grenades and flamethrowers OK too?

3. and why the word bear if they meant carry?

4. and why the words bear arms which when together followed by against means wage war on.

5. and since when did the people need a special amendment to give them a right to bear arms and risk their lives in battle?

6. and why did they put the word infringe at the very end which means to break or ignore the terms or obligations of (an oath agreement law or the like) to disregard, violate, unless they expected some future organization or court to ignore or disregard the first 13 words of the amendment which includes the militia?

7. and the big question why was the Second Amendment written if to give the people the right to own guns when they have always had that unwritten right from colonial days to the present because there has never been a law written that would deny the people of that right?

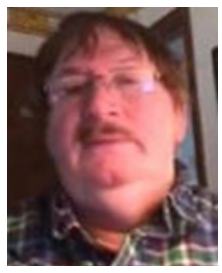
The Second Amendment, I believe, was not written to give a right to people or the militia, it was to give the people who volunteered to join the militia, the right to keep, at home, the guns that, in the future, would be issued to them (G.I., or government issue) and no longer have to depend on volunteers who already owned guns, to maintain a level of manpower needed to protect the rights won by the recent revolution. That was the first and only time that the government issued guns that could be kept, at home, between actions by members of our armed forces.

I want the Second Amendment repealed, as being worthless, since the militias no longer exist. We have the National Guard, in every state, well-funded and still made up of volunteers. Let's get a handle on the proliferation of guns in our society, starting by repealing the Second Amendment.

Kenneth Roberts, Rhode Island, is a 92-year-old World War II US Navy veteran.

The Sleeping Giant

"I fear all we have done is to awaken a sleeping giant & fill him with a terrible resolve". That quote, attributed to Japanese Admiral Isoroku Yamamato following the 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor, is still debated by some historians, as to whether he actually uttered the same. But, it will serve to illustrate our point here, as we ponder why we continue to dispatch foreign aid to our known & perceived enemies? You know, those disenchanted factions that trample & burn our flag, and scream "death to America!" Same ones whom consistently vote against us at the United Nations, and any other World forum they are able to inject their venomous hate & ill will toward us. The list of our "cherished" beneficiaries is seemingly endless, from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe; our kind generosity is unmatched on the globe. Here are but a few of them: China; Huh? Wait! Didn't they just pass America as the former #1 World Economy? Well of course they must be worthy of our dollars, even if they remain the largest Communist country & human rights violators on the planet, eclipsed only by ISIS. Must not forget our friend Colombia either, their drug cartel-infused government couldn't survive without U.S. greenbacks. Cuba remains on our pay list too, Humanitarian aid it's called. Cuba hasn't changed one whit since Castro sacked Havana in 1959 wresting control from Fulgencio Batista. Obama wants to establish relations with them now, but hey, quality cigars may be in this deal! Good buddy Egypt, we can't forget you. We get to hear some occasional "down with America!" chants from your citizenry here & there on the news, along with the usual "death to the great Satan!". We should be depicted as a generous Lucifer at least? Iran, yeah, sure we send them gratuities, this is to help offset their budding nuclear program, gee whiz! With nothing more sinister to see here, let's move on to Libya. Well they did "kind of" burn our embassy down & kill off our ambassador with other senior staff there, but they also are a little short of capital, you must understand. Oh, & the rest of the numerous Middle East countries that literally "hate our guts", do we have a deal for you folks; We'll keep the green stuff flowing to you while you continue to scheme horrendous terror & murder plots against us & our allies, all the while remaining intolerant of all other religions, excluding (Islam of course,) as you engage in decapitating helpless human beings, including women & children. Pakistan, oh dear Pakistan, how could we neglect to remember you, when its cash dole-out time? When no other refuge options for mass- murderer Osama Bin Laden seemed to exist, you unselfishly gave him (sniff) a home. Pakistan you even threatened us, if we ever made a like incursion into your sovereign nation again, similar to when we came for Bin Laden, there just might be consequences! We never really questioned you on why that poor misunderstood jihadist, was lounging there in your country in the first place. That would be unseemly & simply rude of us to ask! Here is your cash, take it with our apologies. Mexico, dear neighbor, we have & will continue to endow you with uncounted millions. You in turn, have always respected our sovereign laws, and continue to replenish us with fresh "potential workers," and a bountiful supply of dangerous drugs that flow freely. Doesn't mean squat, that this influx of illegal foreigners could displace American worker's opportunities? That's fine; we only have about 102 million jobless Americans. Hey, just a measly 49% of Americans are on some government assistance, while we still have whooping 51% of those of working age, still employed. We can sustain that percentage indefinitely, can't we? Step on up to the pay-master's window Mexico, and receive your well deserved financial due. Seems the more damage another country inflicts on America, our economy, our people, the more of our treasure, we want to shell out to them? Palestine, we gave you staggering amounts of capital, & our reward for our largesse? Using the coinage to finance missiles to lob into Israel, (our only true friend in the entire region), & sponsor terrorist activities, sometimes on your own people, when your not busy killing them pesky Jews. Russia, Yemen, India, the list goes on. The greatest nation the world has ever seen is in danger of going destitute, because it can't manage its collective wallet. Much like errant, careless parents, we continue to reach into our pockets, to throw wads of cash at feckless, undeserving & overall ungrateful children. There should be great concern & apprehension in Washington over this lackadaisical approach to securing our foreign aid purse strings, but there is naught. Heaven help us if we should raise our voices in unison, shouting "Enough!" Congress continues to ignore this travesty. You can never succeed in appeasing "friends", using cash is a lesson they will never learn nor accept. Back to our "Sleeping Giant". He has long ago gone back to his decade's long slumber, & most are loathe disturbing him. We ourselves have also been napping, allowing our elected representatives to shirk their fiscal responsibilities, as many Americans struggle to just simply support their families. It takes little imagination to envision a scenario that appears increasingly likely of America going under, especially if allowed to function much longer in this irresponsible mode. Shhh! We might wake him! Sweet dreams America.



Mike is a freelance writer from small town New London, Iowa.

His primary focus is world events as they occur, & the subsequent impact here in America while factoring in appropriate political, religious & social strife results. He fiercely advocates following & protecting the U.S. Constitution, as our rule of laws.

He remains dedicated to the study of Eschatology, (aka) (End Times Biblical prophecy) & Christian Church history, including other world faiths. especially Islam.

The author embraces a deep belief that America's continuing decline, results from significant detachment from our former moral & cultural identity, & disintegration as the World's leader. He fosters a strong conviction that it remains incumbent on us all, to value & advance these truths over opinion, whenever possible.

Columns & Letters

A Week in the Valley

Dear Friends,

I was back in the Valley this week, where I enjoyed having a townhall meeting with around a hundred Cigna employees who discussed ObamaCare, jobs, water, and other issues with me. Hundreds of Cigna jobs in Visalia had been jeopardized by ObamaCare regulations that put U.S. insurers at a disadvantage with foreign-based companies in issuing health plans for Americans living overseas. However, a bipartisan group of House members passed a law I co-authored to cancel those regulations, and the cancellation was enacted into law in December. You can read about the townhall meeting here and here.

I also had some good exchanges this week with local media and radio callers, who questioned me on ISIS, Hillary Clinton's private emails, Netanyahu's speech to Congress, and other topics.

Sincerely,

Devin

Devin Nunes
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

"Great article. Another thing that has changed is that the VTD and Tulare-Advance Register are designed and paginated in Arizona. The so-call "local" editor and publisher, or any of the VTD's shrunken staff, have no input regarding the selection of wire copy. Local editors used to select national and international stories based on their knowledge of the community and what might be of interest to readers here — agriculture stories, for example.
But I guess editors in Arizona know more about what we, who live here, are interested in."
— *Jordan Righi, on* ***Visalia Times-Delta Struggles to Keep Autonomy***

"A lot of good people have been — and continue to be — chewed up and spit out by the dysfunctional, cancerous machine Gannett has allowed the T-D to become. Folks in Tulare County deserve better. A local daily MUST care about the community it covers — and encourage and support its news-gathering team. Emphasizing digital platforms and worrying about metrics are a smoke screen. Teamwork, accuracy and positive morale are what make newspapers work and these ideals have got to be emphasized in building any newsroom of the future. Community journalism, while far from lucrative, is still very important and necessary in our 21st century world. Ten years ago, in another company-wide initiative, Gannett rechristened its newsrooms 'local information centers.' With regard to the T-D's orientation then, the moniker could not have been further from the truth. Keep up the good work there Catherine (and Joseph)!"
— *George Lurie, on* ***Visalia Times-Delta Struggles to Keep Autonomy***

"What a waste of time by the County. How many thousands did they spend in legal fees? And now, their stupidity brings us a 2 million bill. Good job County."
— *Clay F. Peters, on* ***PERB Rules Against Tulare County***

"Tell ya what Chewie, and Mr Pilagard I'll be more than happen to confront both of you on each and every lie

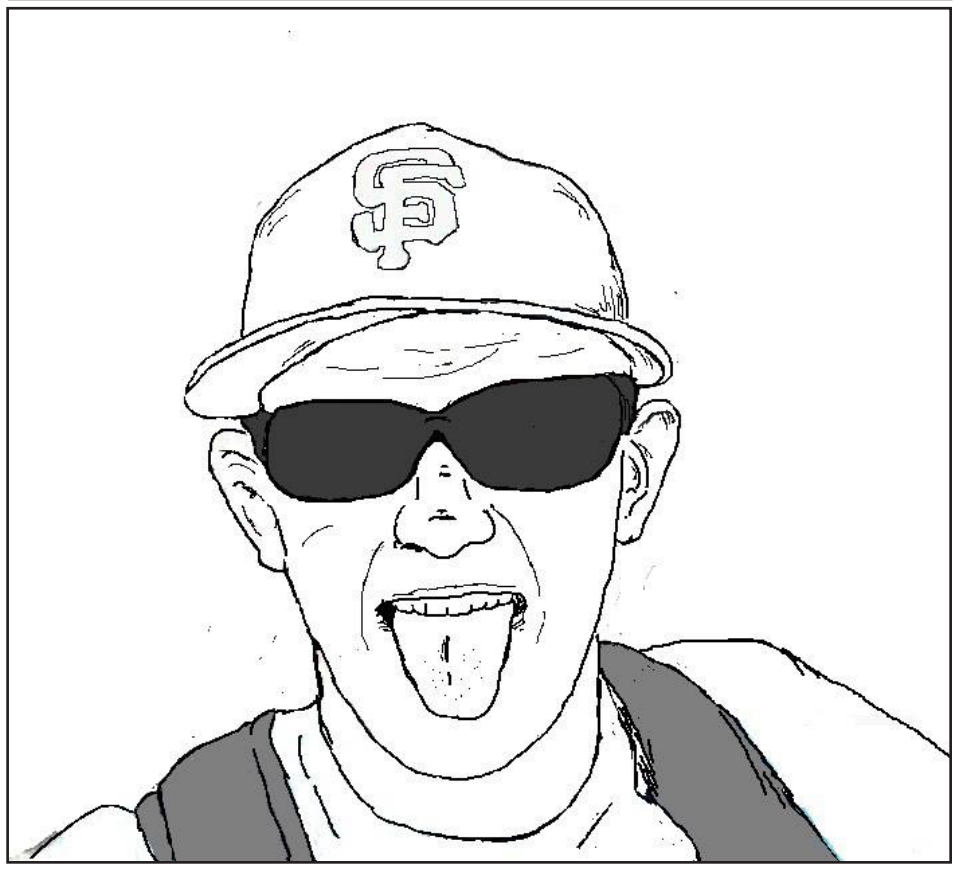
I DARE YOU !!"
— *Mary Bryant, on* ***Mooney Grove Group Prepares for Renovations***

"Mr Bacca Not a word of what you have stated is fact It is all a big lie that Parks and Rec manager Neil Pilagard has you believing Are you really THAT dumb? I was asked, once again to put $35-40,000 into a general fund, that Pilagard would take the credit for the donation, where it would NEVER NEVER go towards your precious namesake park Bring on the law enforcement, I have not taken in ONE PENNEY for the park It has been at my own expense FYI I am approved with Attorney General State of Calif with an EIN number and I have incorperated, with 25 months left to complete 501 c3 status I'm as legal as it gets Mr Chew Bacca, oops I mean Hugh Bacca Pilagard is laughing, all the way to HIS bank"
— *Mary Bryant, on* ***Mooney Grove Group Prepares for Renovations***

"I would like to spread the word that there will be a Lindsay High School Alumni Picnic at Mooney Grove Park, April 25,2015, Arbor 9. Starts at 11:00 AM until ?
Everyone who ever attended Lindsay School is invited to attend this picnic, bring your own preferred lunch and beverage. There will be desert table for those who may want to bring one to share.
Arbor 9 has space for 400 people"
— *Lee Wood, on* ***Mooney Grove Group Prepares for Renovations***

Black Tie

Alex Oldenbourg



Carl forgets recent history — the Giants won't win the series again until 2016.

Veteran's Corner

Dependent Parent Benefit

Joe Wright

A Veteran whose parent(s) are dependent upon him/her for financial support may be paid additional benefits. Dependency of a parent is based on need. Both the parental relationship and financial dependency of the parent must be established to qualify for this benefit. In order to be eligible, the veteran must be in receipt of compensation with a combined evaluation of at least 30 percent, or the veteran must be in receipt of VA educational benefits based on enrollment of half-time or more.

The term "parent" means a biological father or mother, or adoptive father or mother, or a person (i.e., foster parent, stepparent, etc.) who for a period of not less than one year, stood in the relationship of a parent to a veteran at any time before his or her entry into active service. The term "dependent parent" means either the parent's income and net worth meet certain limits as defined by law, or a parent with substantial income or assets has correspondingly high expenses.

Since the benefit is based on need, VA cannot pay additional benefits for a dependent parent(s) whose countable income is greater than the limit set by law, or whose net worth is sufficient to meet basic needs without assistance from VA. To determine need, the parent(s) must report their income from all sources such as gross wages, Social Security, retirement, pension, insurance, interest and dividends for the previous 12 months. The parent(s) must also report the current value of all assets, such as annuities, stocks, bonds, businesses and bank accounts. They do not have to report personal property such as a home, car, furniture or clothing. A portion of medical expenses may be used to reduce the amount of income, VA considers when determining eligibility. The dependent parent(s) should report the amount of expenses paid that were not reimbursed by insurance. Expenses for rent (or housing), home repairs, maintenance, clothing, medical care, utilities, groceries, taxes, etc., should also be reported.

The Kings County Veterans Service Office issues Veteran ID cards to honorably discharged veterans. Contact Joe Wright if you would like to receive periodic veteran's information by email. There are many state and federal benefits and programs available to veterans and their dependents. To find out if you are eligible for any of these benefits, visit or call our office. We can and will assist you in completing all required application forms. You can get information on the Web from the Kings County Veterans Service Office webpage at www.countyofkings.com.

Joe Wright, retired Navy Master Chief Petty Officer, is the Veterans Service Officer for Kings County. Send your questions to the Veterans Service Office, 1400 W. Lacey Blvd, Hanford, CA 93230; call 852-2669; or e-mail joe.wright@co.kings.ca.us.

Send us your Letters to the Editor

By mail:
208 W. Main, Ste. E, Visalia, CA 93291

By email: editor@ourvalleyvoice.com

Editor's note:
Now that the Valley Voice is receiving many more letters than previously, we'd like to state the obvious by saying that it is not our policy to edit your editorials. Bear this in mind, therefore, when writing us--so please be lucid.

Campaign for Ferret Legalization Growing

Nancy Vigran

In 1933, California developed a law which declared it was illegal to import or possess ferrets, along with other animals, within the state boundaries. That law remains on the books today.

To many ferret lovers and owners, the law is antiquated and needs to be, if not abolished, at least revised. California and Hawaii are the only two states in the US with a continued outlawing of the weasel-related domesticated species.

Pat Wright of La Mesa is the organizer of LegalizeFerrets.org. The Southern California man has dedicated his life to the little, furry creatures and the campaign of getting them legalized in the state. He has kept pet ferrets since the 1980's, when they began to rise in popularity as pets, and wants others to legally be allowed to do the same.

"I wanted a more interactive pet than my cats, and I could not have a dog," Wright said. "If my first little guy (ferret) hadn't been so wonderful, I never would have devoted my life to them (ferrets)."

A source from Visalia, who did not want her identity revealed and will be known as CS, concurs. CS had not been around ferrets until she saw one at her future sister-in-law's home, out of state.

"I loved it, thinking it was so cute," she said.

Since then, CS and her husband have added six pet ferrets to their household. They also have their own human toddler.

"It's like having a bunch of two-year-olds," she said. "They don't bark or bite, they are gentle, sweet and loving."

They are also good with her daughter, and pose no threat, she said. CS' ferrets have their own room. This is for their own safety, she said. Ferrets are naturally curious and play with most anything. All of CS' ferrets are spayed or neutered and they are never allowed outside, she said, nor does anyone see them other than close friends or family.

It is legal to purchase ferrets in Nevada, and CS, along with other local ferret owners, have purchased their pets in Las Vegas and brought them home.

CS says she has signed petitions for ferrets to become legal, but other than that has remained quiet, in order to protect her pets.

In 1988, Wright was part of Ferrets Unanimous, a grassroots group in San Diego County. He has avidly been reaching out to politicians and authorities since, trying to get the 80-plus-year-old law abolished.

"It's so difficult to get a legislative sponsor," he said.

Legislators just don't take it as a serious issue, he added.

And so, the California Legalization Initiative For Ferrets (CLIFF) is in the works. About 90,000 signatures are required, Wright said, to get an initiative on the ballot for legalization. The plan and hope is to build momentum and get this done by early 2016.

The original law forbidding the transport and keeping of ferrets within the state was made to protect the state's natural resources and public health.

"California animal importation restrictions to protect not only these wildlife resources, but also the State's agricultural interests, the public's health and safety, the wild populations of imported species, and the welfare of imported animals, themselves," according to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife website.

Want to voice your opinion? Visit the Valley Voice website at www.ourvalleyvoice.com and vote in our local poll.

Lydia House, operations manager of the Valley Oak SPCA, said she has not seen a ferret brought into the shelter for as long as she has worked there. If one were to be picked up or released to shelter staff, she would have to contact the Department of Fish and Wildlife, she said.

"Personally, I am behind their being legalized," she said. "From what I have read, they are domesticated and wouldn't be able to survive on their own, without someone helping them."

Redwood Veterinary Hospital veterinarian Penny Fleischer agrees--especially since their owners have paid a lot of money for them, she said.

Since she began as a vet in the 1980's, Fleischer has seen ferrets come in to the practice. It is not illegal for veterinarians to care for the animals or even hospitalize them as a temporary measure.

"I do have ferrets come in," she said, "and when I first started practice I wasn't even suppose to treat them."

Ferrets, however, should be seen on a regular basis, she said. They should be vaccinated for and are very susceptible to canine distemper. They should also receive regular rabies vaccinations, with a ferret-approved, rabies vaccine. Fleischer also recommends that they be spayed or neutered for their own health.

Ferrets are susceptible to fleas. There is at least one type of flea treatment designated for use on ferrets on the label. Many pet stores carry ferret products including specialized food.

Ferrets are carnivorous, Fleischer said.

"They were used to hunt rodents and rabbits," she said. "I can't imagine anyone (locally) would have a problem with them hunting rodents."

And, "they wouldn't make it in the wild," she said, "there are too many predators including dogs, cats, coyotes and hawks."

Wright and LegalizeFerrets.org are planning on campaigning all around the state to get the word out and get signatures for CLIFF throughout this year.

Thursday, April 2 is National Ferret Day. For more information visit, www.legalizeferrets.org, or the group's Facebook page, www.facebook.com/LegalizeFerrets.org. For more information provided by the Department of Fish and Wildlife, visit www.dfg.ca.gov/wildlife/nongame/nuis_exo/ferret/

VALLEY VOICE
Valley Scene

Toro y Moi Makes Rare Appearance at Cellar Door

Staff Reports

Toro y Moi have played almost every major fest over the past few years based on their strong live show. This year's Coachella festival is the next big event the band will play. To see them Tuesday, March 24 in a venue as small as Cellar Door is ultra-rare and will make for a very special experience for Visalia-area show-goers.

The band's new single "Empty Nesters" is climbing the charts and building much anticipation for their forthcoming full-length release "What For?" This show is already almost sold out.

Opening to the scream of F1's speeding around a racetrack, and maintaining that intensity with booming guitar riffs and psychedelic effects throughout, the forthcoming album from Toro Y Moi is definitely making a statement.

Or maybe a few statements. But Chaz Bundick, the frontman and songwriter, is leaving it up to you to figure out what they are.

While it is obvious that each song is crafted around a personally meaningful experience, Chaz seems to purposefully leave the lyrics just vague enough to let each listener mold it into something unique. Chaz presents you with a few themes: love, beauty, nature--then gently lets go of your hand so you can wander off on your own.

A feeling of searching for something threads its way through every song on the album, which is aptly named "What For?"

It feels contradictory in a very human way, like Chaz is swinging between waiting for something and not being able to wait anymore. But the swinging isn't panicked or frustrated, it's just a situation that he's reflecting on. The songs are heavy with nostalgia, too, for simpler times, better music, more fulfilling relationships.

Chaz references Weezer to warn you that "there is no one to destroy your sweater" and, in another song, recalls Big Star to declare that "rock and roll is here to stay." It feels like he misses everything (even things he wasn't around for yet), but is somehow excited for what comes next.

"What For?" is a glimpse into the life of a guy trying to figure out what it all means. The music is influenced by bands like Big Star, Talking Heads, Tim Maia, Todd Rundgren, but it doesn't quite sound like any of them in particular. And it isn't trying to. It has that special something that Chaz imbues in every Toro Y Moi album, his personal filter on the world he experiences. So whatever message you take from the album, don't forget that it's good. As Chaz himself so candidly believes, "Good is good. Good finds its own audience."

Chaz Bundick

Vinyl Willimas opens for Toro y Moi on March 24.

Vinyl Williams is a lifelong music & art project by Lionel Williams from Los Angeles. Works include improvisations in Berlin w/ Machinedrum, Verity Susman of Electrelane, Jochen Arbeit of Einstuerzende Neubauten, with help of The Mindpirates. Exhibitions in LA, NY, Seoul, Berlin. Tours include USA and S. Korea. Space cruisin' teal pop driven by hypnotic kraut rhythms and shoegaze phantasms.

The Cellar Door is located at 101 W. Main St. in Visalia. Doors open at 6:30pm and the concert begins at 7pm.

Pick up the last few tickets ($20--all ages) quickly at Ticketweb.com or Velouria Records, 109 E. Main St.

South Valley Artists Display Work for Weekend of March 20-22

Staff Reports

The South Valley Artists' Studio Tour features artists in Lindsay, Exeter, Woodlake, Springville, Porterville and Three Rivers, Friday-Sunday, March 20-22.

Those on the tour will find a different "look" in Lindsay with two studios open; that of Ginny Wilson's Blue Ridge Photography, and the second, the studio of Merary Lopez at Healthy Start, an organization that provides services to the families of Lindsay students.

Photo by Ginny Wilson

Lopez, born and raised in Mexico, graduated from Universidad de Montemorelos with a Bachelor's Degree in Visual Arts in 1992. An artist in her own right, she also teaches art classes and art history for children and young adults at Healthy Start in Lindsay. Her own paintings as well as teaching demonstrations and the work of her students will be on display at the Healthy Start studio, 400 E. Hermosa St.

Wilson has an outdoor gallery and studio "with a view" as one looks east toward the Sierra from her hilltop home. Her photographs include scenes in nature, and images from the U.S. and Europe. All illustrate her love of shape, contrast, and color. Her studio is located at 1864 E. Lindmore.

Other nearby studios include Eric Gonzales' at 201 Portola Ave., Exeter, as well as Linda Hengst and John Sundstrom in Woodlake, Lindsay Dion, Joy Harvey and Ron Zanini in Springville and Joy Collier (Featured Artist!) on Success Valley Dr., Porterville. Collier also has a one-person exhibit at the Porterville Art Association, 152 N. Main St.

In addition to the two studios in Lindsay, an on-going exhibit by long-time Porterville College Art Teacher, Tom Howell, is still on the walls at the Museum/Gallery, 165 N. Gale Hill in Lindsay. The Museum/Gallery will be open during Sunday hours of the tour.

The South Valley Artists' Studio Tour takes place from 5-8pm Friday, 10am-5pm Saturday and 10am-4pm Sunday.

Tour booklets including tickets and maps are available at each location for $15.

The Three Rivers JazzAffair wants music to become a family affair with musicians and audience of all ages, such as the Au Brothers, who are all under the age of 30. Photo courtesy of JazzAffair

JazzAffair Aims to Please Those of All Ages

Staff Reports

For more than 40 years, the High Sierra Jazz Band has been going strong, playing locally and abroad and hosting the Three Rivers JazzAffair. This year, the band and Sierra Traditional Jazz Club members want to make it a family affair, the weekend of April 10-12.

"We'd like to get people to bring their children and grandchildren," said Rusty Crain, Jazzaffair director. "The music we've been playing is popular with older people, but when younger people hear it, they like it. They just hadn't been exposed to it yet."

The theme is not only with attendees, but with participating bands, as well.

A long-time participant band has been the Reedley River Rats, composed of Reedley High School students from freshman to seniors. The members change from year to year, but the band continues to perform and be a key participant in the JazzAffair.

For the first time, Kylie Castro, granddaughter of High Sierra Jazz Band drummer Charlie Castro, will perform with her own group, a trio comprising of a pianist, stand-up bass and Castro singing vocals. She has joined in the fun before, but this is the first time she's headlining an act.

There will be a dozen or so other bands, gathered from around the country, performing their own variety of jazz, throughout the weekend in different venues along the Three Rivers corridor including the host, High Sierra Jazz Band. Other bands include the New Orleans-influenced Au Brothers, Coronet Shop Suey, named after a Louie Armstrong composition and the jazz-marching band sounds of the High Street Jazz Band.

The weekend kicks off Friday mid-afternoon and lasts through 5pm, Sunday. Visitors come from throughout the Western states and beyond come to spend the weekend listening to jazz. All motels fill up, as does the RV facility at the fairgrounds. But there is always room for more local enthusiasts, Crane said.

"We're hoping for good weather and would like to see more local people

JAZZAFFAIR continued on **19 »**

Reg365

WHCCD's Reg365 Allows Students to Register for Whole Year at One Time

West Hills Community College District is continuing its innovative Reg365 registration program, which allows students to register for a full three semesters' of classes at one time. Students will be able to register for the summer and fall 2015 semesters and the spring 2016 semester at once.

Reg365 kicked off in April of last year as part of a continuing effort to increase student success and retention and is available to students at WHCC Coalinga, WHCC Lemoore and the North District Center in Firebaugh. The program's first year met with approval from staff and students.

"Our Reg365 was a great success last year," said Sylvia Dorsey-Robinson, vice president of student services at WHCC Lemoore. "West Hills Community College District has paved the way for students to realize their educational dreams earlier than before. This unprecedented initiative conveys the importance of the student education plan and our efforts to reduce the amount of time it takes for students to complete their educational goals."

In particular, the program is an asset for students who have an educational plan. An educational plan maps out the courses required for each degree and allows students to know ahead of time what courses they will need to take each semester.

"Reg365 has been a tremendous planning tool for students, counseling and advising staff to be able to map out a students' educational plan for the entire year," said Sandy McGlothlin, vice president of student services at WHCC Coalinga. "All students benefit from having information on the time it takes for them to complete their academic goal whether they are a basic skills or transfer student. With Reg365, if the student follows their plan without withdrawing from classes or getting substandard grades they may have to repeat, they will only have to access the registration process twice in two years."

Students with priority registration dates will be notified in April while open registration for all other students begins on May 4.

As in the past, students are required to pay for the summer and fall semesters within 24 hours of registering. Payment for the spring 2016 semester will be due on November 1.

Students can currently view the 2015-2016 schedule online. Visit www.westhillscollege.com/reg365 for more information.

WHCCD Honored with Technology Focus Award

The West Hills Community College District has won a Technology Focus Award, an annual honor bestowed by the Chief Information Service Officers Association and the California Community College Chancellor's Office that recognizes colleges who use technology to solve significant problems to the benefit of students, staff and faculty.

WHCCD won the award for its innovative Reg365 registration program, which allows students to enroll for classes a year in advance and was utilized for the first time in April of 2014.

"This project and the award bring great recognition to our colleges and district because of a focus on student success and completion," said WHCCD Chancellor Dr. Frank Gornick. "The work that has gone into this effort was significant."

Nominations for the award are evaluated based on the scope and complexity of the project nominated, technological innovation, the benefit of the project to the institution and its students and staff and the demonstration of excellence and professionalism.

"Bringing Reg365 to life required dozens of West Hills College departments collaborating to reengineer nearly every aspect of student services and instruction," said Stuart Van Horn, Vice Chancellor of Educational Services and Workforce Development.

Van Horn, Michelle Kozlowski, Sylvia Dorsey-Robinson, Sandy McGlothlin, Maria Lourenco, Kyle Crider, Carlos Posadas and John Wright were part of the team of district employees nominated, along with former registrar Keith Sterns.

RECYCLE THIS PAPER
WE ALREADY HAVE

Larry Gardner (bassoon), Nancy Wallace (flute), and Laura Porter (harp).

Figarden Trio to Play Recital at Porterville College, March 21

The public is invited to a special, free recital by the Figarden Trio at 7:30pm Saturday, March 21 in Porterville College, music room (CA-2). The trio is made up of husband and wife Larry Gardner (bassoon) and Nancy Wallace (flute), along with Laura Porter (harp).

"Instrumentation, to a composer, is like blending of colors is to an artist," said David Hensley, professor of music at Porterville College. "When a trio plays, there is a certain tonal sound, or timbre, that is unique to that combination of instruments," Hensley continued. "Harp and flute have been blended together by composers for generations because of the unique beauty of this combination; add a bassoon and the magic triples."

Porter, principal harpist for the Fresno Philharmonic and Bakersfield Symphony Orchestras, has previously teamed with Wallace, who also plays in the Bakersfield Symphony. To form the Figarden Trio, they added bassoonist Gardiner, who is principal bassoonist with the Fresno Philharmonic. All three players enjoy a fine reputation for teaching and performing in the Valley.

"A masterpiece for this instrumentation (flute, bassoon and harp) is Pastorales de Noel written by 20th Century French composer, Andre Jolivet," said Porter. "This piece inspired us to try to find companion repertoire for this concert. It is also the only piece (on our program) that is entirely original to our three instruments," she continued. "Much of what we will perform is written originally for at least two of the instruments, with one instrument playing a transcribed part."

The recital is free of charge and is open to the public. Parking passes will not be required during the event.

Porterville College is located at 100 E. College Avenue in Porterville. For more information, visit www.portervillecollege.edu or call (559) 791-2255.

Wish Upon A Star to Host 21st Annual Golf Tournament

Tulare County residents are invited to help dreams come true on Friday, May 15 during Wish Upon A Star's 21st Annual Golf Tournament. Wish Upon A Star is a local non-profit that grants wishes for children with life-threatening and high-risk illnesses, ages 3 to 21. While the organization is based right here in Visalia, their services are available to children through the entire state of California, with the majority of wishes coming from Valley Children's Hospital in Madera.

The Annual Golf Tournament, which is a four-person scramble format, raises funds to make more magical moments come true in 2015. Held at Valley Oaks Golf Course in Visalia, the tournament will be a day full of golf, food, fun and prizes with contest holes, a ball drop contest, a hole-in-one contest offering a brand new 2015 vehicle from Visalia Ford and Groppetti Automotive, team prizes awarded to the first, second and last place teams, as well as an amazing silent auction.

Individual player fees are $150, and each player will receive lunch, drinks, practice balls, cart and green fees, a bag full of tee prizes, as well as hors d'oeuvres at the reception held afterwards. Teams that register by May 1 are eligible for the Early Bird Discount of $500, but after May 1 the price goes up to $600. Sponsors are also needed with options ranging from $150 up to $3,000. Local businesses and organizations interested are encouraged to contact Ashley DeGree, Wish Upon A Star's Marketing Communications Coordinator.

The tournament will also feature the 2nd Annual Battle for the First Responders Cup, where all Police, Fire, Corrections Departments, CHP and EMS personnel are invited to battle it out for the trophy…and the bragging rights! Any team with at least three First Responders is eligible.

"It's golf 'fore' a good cause–a total win-win. Just by joining us on May 15, you can help make big wishes come true for children who often have very little time," said DeGree.

This tournament is open to the public and all are encouraged to come out and support Wish Upon a Star and the many Central Valley children suffering with life-threatening illnesses. In their 30+ years of service, Wish Upon A Star has granted more than 1,900 wishes.

All funds raised at the golf tournament will go directly toward wish granting. For more information, visit www.wishuponastar.org, or call 559-733-7753.

Mavericks Welcomes Dennis Agajanian

Staff Reports

On Saturday, March 21, Dennis Agajanian returns to Mavericks Coffee House for a 7pm show. Agajanian has been awarded Musician of the Year six times at the Christian Country Music Awards (CCMA).

In addition, he was previously selected as the Entertainer of the Year by the CCMA three times.

Since 1974, Agajanian has been featured as a performer with the Billy Graham Crusades and later Franklyn Graham. He also has a heart to share the Good News of Jesus Christ throughout the world.

Most recently, in conjunction with Franklin Graham Ministries, he has been working with Eskimo children in the remote Alaskan village of Hooper Bay. Agajanian has participated in international USO shows, Greg Laurie's Harvest Crusades, costarred in three feature length movies and three ABC television specials and featured twice at both the International Bluegrass Festival and the Monterey Cowboy Festival.

He has shared the stage with the likes of Johnny Cash, Ricky Skaggs, Tanya Tucker, Pat Boone, Sons of the San Joaquin, RW Hampton and Gene Autry.

Agajanian has been called the fastest flat pick guitar player in the world. Imagine someone playing the likes of the William Tell Overture and Malaguena with a pick...not easy to do. Classical guitarists have to use all their fingers to play the strings...not Dennis!

Mavericks always appreciates Dennis Agajanian stopping by to perform at the coffee shop.

Likewise, he enjoys entertaining in a small, intimate venue and playing many different types of songs from old time hymns of the faith, contemporary Christian music, classical music and bluegrass to even old cowboy sons.

Slick Rock Film Festival Deadline Nears

The Tulare County Office of Education is preparing for the 12th annual Slick Rock Student Film Festival – Central California's largest student film competition. The deadline for students to submit their films is before midnight on Monday, March 30. Middle and high school students in the seven south Central Valley counties of Fresno, Kern, Kings, Madera, Mariposa, Merced and Tulare are eligible to compete in the festival. Instructions for uploading films can be found at www.slickrockfestival.org.

Students may create videos in various categories ranging from 30-second Public Service Announcements and animated films to music videos and action/dramas.

The Slick Rock awards ceremony will be held Friday, May 15, at the Visalia Fox Theater. The films receiving a "Premiere Cut" designation will be screened at the theater beginning at 9:00am Friday morning. At 5:15pm, students who played a central role in producing "Premiere Cut" films along with their advisors are eligible to participate in the Limo/Red Carpet Walk. The awards ceremony will begin at 6:30pm.

Slick Rock is generously supported by the Tulare & Kings Counties Suicide Prevention Task Force, the Tulare County Film Commission, Tulare County Step Up initiative, and ABC30. For more information, visit www.slickrockfestival.org, or call the CHOICES Prevention Programs at (559) 651-0155.

High Sierra Jazz Band.

JazzAffair

Continued from p. 17

come," he said.

With a one-day ticket, or a three-day pass, one only needs to park once and hitch a ride provided by JazzAffair to visit one of the four different stages with participating artists. Each has their own unique sound and variety of music. Refreshments are available at all venues.

With the desire for family participation, children and grandchildren tickets are half price when attending with parents or grandparents, although children under 12 get in free. Regularly priced three-day tickets are $95; Friday or Sunday one-day tickets are $25 and Saturday tickets are $45. A Three Rivers Lions Club kick-off dinner will be held on Thursday, April 9 at 5pm with food and music for $15.

For more information contact Rusty Crain, 559-561-4549 or visit jazzaffair.ihoststudio.com.

ImagineU Interactive Children's Museum

ImagineU Hosts Spring Break Camp

ImagineU Children's Museum has planned four days of fun activities to celebrate spring—ending with a Princess Party with Elsa from "Frozen." Pre-registration is required and camps fill up fast since attendance is limited. Each camp session is $8 for non members, $3 for members. Make your reservations in person or over the phone with a credit card. Call 733-5975.

Monday, March 30--Create a "bouncy ball," 10am or Noon

Elizabeth from Professor Toy will be here to show children how to make a "bouncy ball." They're easy to make and bounce so high! You can take it home for hours of fun.

Tuesday, March 31--Flower and Lady Bugs, 10am or Noon

A Master Gardner will be here to show children how to plant flowers and learn what kinds of flowers attract lady bugs. Pick out your own flower pot, add some soil and a flower, and you have a masterpiece to take home. We will give you some lady bugs to release in your own back yard.

Wednesday, April 1—Let's Decorate a Birdhouse, 10am or Noon

Decorate your very own birdhouse. Paint it, put stickers, glitter and sparkly stones on it. Whatever your creative heart desires. Then take your birdhouse home to hang outside or display inside.

Thursday, April 2--Winston the Magician, 10am

Winston will be doing amazing magic and amusing comedy with lots of fun audience participation. Always a crowd pleaser.

Thursday, April 2--Princess Party with Elsa from "Frozen," Noon

Elsa will be your host for this "Frozen" party featuring a sing-a-long, a craft, cookies and punch. Dress as your favorite princess and join the festivities.

ImagineU is located at 700 E. Main St., Visalia. It is open Wednesday through Friday from 10am-4pm and Saturday from 12-4pm. Cost is $5 for adults and children 2 and over. Children under 2 are free.

For more information, call 733-5975 or go to www.imagineumuseum.com.

UPHS to Hold Information Nights

University Preparatory High School (UPHS) is accepting applications for students in grades 9-12. Parents of students who are interested in obtaining more information about UPHS (located on the College of the Sequoias (COS) campus) should attend one of the upcoming informational meetings to be held Thursdays, March 19, April 9 and 23, and May 7 at 6pm in Yokut Building, Room 9 on the COS Visalia Campus.

A joint project of the Tulare County Office of Education and the College of the Sequoias (COS), UPHS is a free public high school in the early college model. UPHS students attend COS college classes and accumulate a significant number of college units while they are still in high school. They learn to navigate the complexities of higher education, develop college readiness and experience challenging high school and college curriculum over the course of their high school experience.

UPHS has the highest accreditation from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, as well as approval from the University of California for A-G academic classes. A small and friendly school with an excellent learning environment, UPHS accepts students of all skill levels who are highly motivated, seeking college preparation and leadership opportunities, and who want to give back to the community.

For more information, visit www.tcoe.org/uphs for an enrollment application. To RSVP for the Information Night, call Parent Liaison Araceli Alcala at (559) 730-2529.

Education

VUSD Teachers Work Hard

Craig Wheaton, Ed.D., Superintendent

If you spend any amount of time around a public school teacher, I am sure that you know that teachers work really hard--and they do it for kids! I am very blessed to work in Visalia Unified School District, where this is most true. Day in and day out, teachers are working long hours in their classrooms, at school activities, and often at home preparing for the following school day.

This is a particularly stressful time for teachers. There are new standards to teach, new materials to use and new state assessments to measure student learning. Everything is changing--the report cards are different, the lessons are new and teachers are putting in numerous hours to provide the best learning opportunities for our kids. Change is not easy, it wears on everyone. In VUSD, we're working together, administration and teachers association, to make sure the transition to the new state standards is not only good for our students but also good for our teachers.

The new California State Standards (also known as Common Core State Standards) are preparing our children to compete in the global market. The new standards are built on the foundation skills in our previous standards but emphasize important survival skills for the world of college and career. Problem solving, critical thinking, written and verbal communication, and being flexible and finding multiple ways to solve a problem are just a few of the new skills our children are learning. This requires educators to redesign the daily classroom activities so that students have many opportunities to learn these new skills. That takes a lot of time, and we are working to provide teachers with many resources to assist them in their work.

April is Public Schools Month, and the National Day of the Teacher is during the first week of May. But, I would like to suggest that you don't have to wait until the Day of the Teacher to thank a teacher for all they do for kids. If you see a teacher, it would mean a great deal to them if they heard how much you appreciate their efforts. Go ahead and make a teacher's day by saying, "Thank you!"

I would like to extend my thanks to all of VUSD staff--everyone from the bus driver, to the classroom teacher, to the principal for everything they do to make our community a better place to live.

VUSD High School FRC Robotics Team Qualifies for World Championships

After three grueling days of intense competition, Visalia Unified School District high school students won the 2015 Rookie All Star Award and the 2015 Highest Rookie Seed in the 4th Annual Central Valley Regional FIRST Robotics Competition held at Madera South High School during the weekend of March 7-8. In April, the team advances to the World Championships in St. Louis, Missouri, where they will compete with teams from around the world.

Nearly 50 high school teams from Arizona to Hawaii competed in RECYCLE RUSH, a recycling-themed game played by two Alliances of three robots each. Eight teams from the Fresno area competed, drawing a crowd of around 4,500 spectators. Robots score points by stacking totes on scoring platforms, capping those stacks with recycling containers, and properly disposing of pool noodles, representing litter.

The varsity Sport for the MindTM, FRC combines the excitement of sport with the rigors of science and technology. Under strict rules, limited resources, and time limits, teams of students are challenged to raise funds, design a team "brand," hone teamwork skills, and build and program robots to perform prescribed tasks against a field of competitors. It is as close to "real-world engineering" as a student can get. Volunteer professional mentors lend their time and talents to guide each team.

Each Alliance competes on their respective 26 ft. by 27 ft. side of the playing field. Each match begins with a 15-second Autonomous Period in which robots operate independently of their drivers. During this period, robots attempt to earn points by moving themselves, their yellow totes, and their recycling containers into the area between the scoring platforms, called the Auto Zone.

The Visalia Vanquishers

During the remaining two minutes and 15 seconds of the match, called the Teleop Period, robots are controlled remotely by student drivers located behind the walls at the ends of the field. Teams on an Alliance work together to place as many totes on their white scoring platforms as possible.

Rookie team #5529, the Visalia Vanquishers, are truly pioneers with a mission to inspire students to learn about 21st Century science, technology, engineering, art, and math in a fun and challenging environment that focuses on teamwork, excellence and Gracious Professionalism®. The team recognizes that education across California and the nation is transforming and seeks to bring relevance to academic learning through project-based experiences. We know that student engagement in their learning keeps them in school and focused on learning. We believe that FIRST Robotics Competition enhances our commitment to meaningful learning experiences through our career academies.

The team's next tournament will be in Ventura, CA, where they will continue to gain experience and work to improve the mechanical skills of their robot as well as programming and communication skills. The team has worked approximately six weeks to build their robot, Ramona.

Currently, robotics is offered as an after-school program in many of VUSD elementary schools and as an elective class in three of the four middle schools. This year, the district has supported the start-up of a district high school team and is looking to accelerate student participation in the upcoming 2015-16 school-year.

The team is seeking community support in the form of sponsorship and donations. The team is also looking for community partners that can offer mentoring in areas such as electronics, mechanical engineering, computer-aided design, computer programming, financial planning and community outreach.

Local teams that participated:

- Visalia Vanquishers, Visalia Unified School District, Visalia
- Buchanan Bird Brains, Buchanan High School, Clovis
- IronHorse Robotics, Clovis North High School
- Metallic Thunder, home schooled, Fresno
- MindCraft, Edison High School, Fresno
- Duncan Dynamics, Erma Duncan Polytechnical High School, Fresno
- Hungry Wolves, Clovis East High School

Measure E-Funded School, Classrooms Making Progress

Tons of dirt have been moved and building pads created where the new middle school will be constructed in northwest Visalia, and the academic building at Redwood High School is quickly taking shape.

Underground work is now under way at the Measure E-funded middle school site. Trenches are being dug for the sewer and storm drain lines in preparation for the construction of the two-story school that will feature 24 classrooms, science labs, a band room and choir room, a large stage for performing arts and a food court.

The middle school will be open for the 2016-2017 school year.

The second story of the Redwood academic building is being framed, to be followed by heating and air conditioning systems, plumbing, electrical and work on the elevator/clock tower structure. The building, also funded by Measure E, is due to open for the 2015-2016 school year.

Measure E is the bond measure approved by voters in the Visalia Unified School District in November, 2012.

The summer will be another busy season for Measure E-funded projects, with site security improvements at Visalia Technical Early College (VTEC), Divisadero, Charter Alternative and Fairview schools.

Measure E is also making possible acoustic improvements in the Golden West High School music building and new playgrounds at six elementary schools. Once this work is complete, all of Visalia's older elementary schools will have modern, new play structures.

For further information Measure E-funded projects, contact Robert Groeber, 730-7529, or Craig Wheaton, 730-7522; or visit VUSDEprogress.org.

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Print replica at issuu.com/ourvalleyvoice

Concerts in Three Rivers to Aid Local Causes

Dave Adalian

Springtime in Three Rivers will be filled with music, art and family fun, as a pair of events -- the Earth Jam and the Three Rivers Music Festival -- fill the riverside hills with entertainers coming together from far and wide to support a pair of good causes.

Inaugural Earth Jam

The good times begin with the Earth Jam the weekend of April 17-19 at the Three Rivers Hideaway Campgrounds and Resort, featuring a line-up sure to please lovers of jam bands. Headlining the three days of "camping, music and fun, basically," is Keller Williams, a favorite among post-Grateful Dead jam music fans, said Hard In Productions marketing director Jacqueline Delaney. Also performing will be keyboardist Melvin Seals of the Jerry Garcia Band. Garcia, the late front man for the Grateful Dead, died in 1995. Williams' Keller and the Keels will also perform, as will a long list of national and local acts. The musicians are expected to cross band lines to join each other on stage throughout the weekend.

"It's going to be an ongoing jam," Delaney said. "It's going to be an intimate experience. We're keeping it small."

Each day, the festival will start the revels with a drum circle. The weekend will also feature local and organic foods, vendors, artists and artisans. The small venue will allow camping, with special areas that put visitors "right in all the action," Delaney said.

Also headlining is TROPO, a live electronica band that's gained popularity on the festival circuit and had its start in Three Rivers.

"Two of the three members grew up in Three Rivers," said Delaney, "so they're coming back to their roots."

Tickets, available online at earthjamfestival.com or at White's Music in Visalia, are $65 for the entire weekend if purchased before April 1. Prices go up to $78 after that date. Camping passes are $20 per person, and VIP camping for six people at the stage area is $180. Children 16 and younger will be admitted for free with their parents. Profits from the event will be donated to Valley Children's Hospital and Three Rivers Elementary School.

"We want it to be a family event," Delaney said.

The Three Rivers Hideaway is located at 43365 Sierra Drive.

Fourth Annual Three Rivers Music Festival

On Saturday, May 9, the Three Rivers Music Festival returns for its fourth year at the Lions Roping Arena, with gates opening at 11am and the music beginning at 11:30.

"Last year, we had 13 bluegrass, folk and rock bands," said event organizer Wendy Ballew. "We've got a beer and wine garden, artisans and vendor booths."

Many Three Rivers artists will be working during the festival, as will the artisans. The event also features a silent auction, with items donated by local artist and businesses. While the lineup for 2015 is still being assembled, organizers expect many of the same bands who pleased crowds during previous festivals to return.

Tickets for the event, available at Three Rivers Drugs and Three River Mercantile, as well as online at 3r-aid.org, are $12 before April 20, and $17 after. An additional $1 fee is required to purchase online. Children under 12 will be admitted free of charge, and the festival intends to provide ample entertainment for younger festival-goers.

"There's a whole area just for kids," said Ballew. "They're setting up a big, muddy place for the kids with squirt guns and water balloons."

Children's entertainment will also include games, face painting, a water slide, crafts and activities.

All proceeds from the event will go to benefit the Emergency Aid Alliance, a locally founded and operated charity that helps residents with limited incomes make ends meet and pay for unexpected expenses.

"It can be various things, like 'My septic system went out, and insurance doesn't cover it' or 'I can't afford my pharmaceuticals,'" Ballew said. "In 2013, we helped people with $13,000. Last year, we doubled it. As word gets around, the donations going out have increased. The music festival came because of the need."

Those seeking help from the Emergency Aid Alliance can contact the group through its website -- 3r-aid.org -- or by calling 561-4021.

"We have an application process. It's pretty simple and takes less than an hour," Ballew said. "Then, we go out to their place and talk to them. We try to find ongoing solutions."

The Alliance also maintains a list of local resources to help those in need find long-term solutions to meeting recurring expenses they cannot afford. The festival provides both the funding to help the Alliance's clients, but also fosters a greater local sense of community.

"It's fun with family, and you get out," said Ballew. "You meet the artists and get to meet the community."

The Lions Roping Arena is located at 42490 N. Kaweah River Drive.

Local Businesses Support Leadership Education with a Day of Golf

Staff Reports

On Friday, March 20, the Visalia Chamber of Commerce and the Leadership Visalia Class of 2015 will co-host the 8th Annual Leadership Visalia Golf Tournament at Valley Oaks Golf Course. This annual event raises funds to support leadership education in Visalia.

The 2015 Golf Tournament will feature contests including; hole in one, closest to the hole, the longest drive, and a putting contest.

Additionally, donated items will be raffled off to raise funds for the 2015 Leadership Visalia project. Sponsorship and player opportunities are available by calling the Visalia Chamber at 559-734-5876 or by going to Chamber website www.visaliachamber.org. The Chamber expects the tournament to fill quickly, teams and individuals are encouraged to registers soon.

The Visalia Chamber of Commerce would like to thank the following companies for sponsoring the 2015 Leadership Visalia Golf Tournament.

- Leadership Sponsors:
- California Water Service
- Quality Jewelers
- Visalia Ceramic Tile
- Tee & Green Sponsors:
- Bank of the Sierra
- Brian Thoburn
- Britt Fussel
- CSET - Community Services & Employment Training
- Don Sharp, Buckman-Mitchell
- Family Healthcare Network
- Four Seasons Handy Market
- Hydrite Chemical
- Kaweah Delta Hospital
- McDonald's Main Office
- Patrick Salazar State Farm Insurance Agency
- Quail Park
- R&F Disposal
- Spirit 88.9
- Tule River Tribe/Eagle Mountain Casino
- Visalia Mall

Leadership Visalia is a nine-month program that explores both personal leadership and community development issues.

More than 350 participants have graduated from the program.

Some graduates have gone onto become city council members, school board members, planning commissioners, county supervisors, state legislators, members of non-profit boards, officers of corporations, and board members for the Chamber itself.

The Visalia Chamber of Commerce serves as the "voice of business" and provides strategic leadership and engagement in building the future of business and the community through information, services, and advocacy to the employers of our com-

NASS Modifies Publication Schedule for Rice Prices

Staff Reports

Issued March 11, 2015 by the Agricultural Statistics Board of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. For more information contact Anthony Prillaman, Anthony.prillaman@nass.usda.gov, 202-720-2127

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) is modifying the publication schedule for rice prices. The year-to-date U.S. monthly prices and marketings, as well as the preliminary marketing year average prices for rice normally published each year in the August Agricultural Prices report will now be published in the October Agricultural Prices report. The October report will also include the year-to-date monthly prices and preliminary market year average price for California medium and short grain rice, as well as the final monthly medium and short grain rice prices and marketing year average price for all other estimating states. The August Agricultural Prices report will continue to include prices by length of grain for both the full months of June and July, as well as the previous year's July price.

NASS will continue to publish the final monthly U.S. rice prices and marketings, the final U.S. marketing year average price by length of grain, and the final monthly prices and marketing year average price for California medium and short grain rice in the January Agricultural Prices report

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Calendar

Through March 24: Teen Fiction Writers' Workshop, 4-5:30pm
Local author Janet Nichols Lynch will conduct a Tulare County Office of Education Workshop on Tuesdays at 7000 Doe Ave., Suite A, Visalia. Students, grades 7-12, may apply by submitting a short story or novel except, 500 to 3,000 words, to janetl@ersconnect.org. The deadline for submissions is Jan. 16.

Through March: The Photography of Deborah Nolan
Photography 20"x30" by Deborah Nolan is on display at Sue Sa's Club House Deli located at 699 West Center Avenue, Visalia.

Through June 4: Women of Tulare County
This exhibit showcases these extraordinary women of Tulare County from 1855 to the present through a series of posters. Women featured include Josephine Allensworth, Anna Mills Johnston, Eleanor Calhoun, Ina Stiner, Annie Mitchell, Mary Garcia Pohot, Rose Ann Vuich, Jean Shepard, Lali Moheno, and Ester Hernandez. This exhibit is on the second floor of the Visalia Branch of the Tulare County Library outside of the Annie R. Mitchell History Room through June 4 and be. Exhibit hours are from 1--5pm, Tuesday--Friday. For more information on this exhibit, please contact Lisa Raney at 713-2723 or the reference desk at 713-2703. The Visalia Library is located at 200 W. Oak Ave, Visalia, CA 93291.

Through June: Visalia Branch Library Teen Homework Center, 3-6:30pm
The Visalia Branch Library offers a place for teens to do their homework Tuesdays through Fridays. The library is located at 200 W. Oak St.

Through June: Tulare Public Library Homework Help
Homework help for children in grades K-12 will be available in the Tulare Public Library Learning Center on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 4-7pm and Saturdays from 1-4pm.

Through October 28: Free Fly Casting Instruction, 6-7pm
Kaweah Fly Fishers are offering fly casting lessons at Del Lago Park in Tulare every Wednesday evening until October 28. Rods and reels will be supplied or you may bring your own.

MARCH

March 19: Free Immigration Legal Clinic, 11am-3pm
OneJustice's Justice Bus Project is partnering with Family Services and the UFW Foundation to offer a free legal clinic for individuals in need of assistance with immigration-related issues. At the clinic, volunteer law students and expert attorneys will meet one-on-one with clients to screen for common forms of immigration relief and discuss immigration options. The clinic is scheduled for Thursday, March 19 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Goshen Village Apartments II Community Room, 31114 Road 72 in Goshen. Space is limited. The public can call Family Services' Goshen Family Center at (559) 735-8173 to make an appointment. For more information about Family Services, visit www.fstc.net For more information about OneJustice, visit http://www.one-justice.org

March 20: 7th Annual Visalia Chamber Leadership Golf Tournament, 10:30am
Registration begins at 10:30am at the Valley Oaks Golf Course, with a 12:01pm Shotgun Start of 4-person scrambles. Practice balls, cart & green fees included, and lunch is provided. 20% off at Pro Shop on golf day only. Raffle tickets $1 each or 6 for $5.00; Mulligan $5 each--limit 2; Bump-up $5 each--per player, entire team must participate.1st Place, $500; 2nd Place, $200; 3rd Place, $100.

March 20: 26th Annual Friday Night Live Lip Sync Contest, 6-9pm
The Tulare County Office of Education sponsors a lip sync contest broken down into four categories: lip sync, dance, showcase and novelty. For more information visit Gene at genem@tcoe.org

March 21 & 22: Gem, Mineral & Jewelry Show, 10am
The 7th Annual Gem, Mineral & Jewelry Show will be held at Trinity Hall, 470 Champion St., Lemoore. Food, beverages, door prizes, kids activities and gems and minerals from around the world are featured. For information, call 309-3433.

March 21: Spring Kids Fest, 12-3:30pm
Kids can enjoy rides, special performances and games at Hidden Valley Park. Admission is $3 prior to and $5 on the day of the event. For more info and performance schedules visit www.cityofhanfordca.com

March 21: Dennis Agajanian plays Mavericks Coffee House, 7pm
Dennis Agajanian has been awarded Musician of the Year six times at the Christian Country Music Awards (CCMA). In addition, he was previously selected as the Entertainer of the Year by the CCMA three times. Call 559-624-1400 for tickets or stop by Mavericks Coffee House & Roasting Company, 238 E Caldwell, Visalia for tickets. Doors open at 6pm. Limited seating.

March 21: The Count Basie Orchestra, 7:30pm
The 19-piece orchestra will perform at the Visalia Fox Theatre, 300 W. Main St., Visalia. For information, visit foxvisalia.org.

March 21: Hanford Comedy Jam, 9pm
Located inside the Hanford Mall, Que Pasa Mexican Cafe presents a night of comedy for those over 21. Tickets are $10. For more information call (559) 584-0444

March 22: CROP Hunger Walk, 1:30pm
This year's CROP Hunger Walk starts at St. Paul's Anglican Church. This is a communitywide walk to raise awareness and money for worldwide and local hunger relief. Twenty-five percent of the money raised will be donated to Foodlink of Tulare County. For more information call Joy Marshall at 734-8275.

March 23: Great Conversations-- excerpts from *Pensées*, 4-5:30pm
A discussion of this Great Work by Pascal will take place on the COS main campus in Hospital Rock 133.

March 24: Children's Book Drive, 11am-5pm
At the Exeter library children's books will be the focus of a book drive, but other donations-- paperbacks, hardcovers, magazines & the like--would also be appreciated.

March 24: KFUN Mixer, 5:30-7:30pm
The Hanford Chamber invites you to come meet everyone from Hanford's brand-new radio station at the Smoke Joint BBQ Restaurant, located at 102 West 7th Street in Hanford. For more information call the Chamber at (559) 582-0483 or KFUN at (559) 639-5925.

March 27 to May 22: Personal Finance, 3-5pm
The Visalia Branch Library will offer classes on "Stretching the Food Dollar" every other Friday in the Blue Room. Registration is not required.

March 27 & 28: Golden West Dance Presents: Everybody Dance Now, 7pm
Featuring the Illusions Dance Team, Advanced & Intermediate Dance classes, Introduction to Dance classes, and a variety of solo and small group performances. Show Times: Friday and Saturday March 27 & 28 7:00 PM at the historic LJ Williams Theater. Tickets are $9.00 each and can be purchased ahead of time at Golden West or at the door. 730-7801 ext. 1003 for questions or ticket purchases.

March 28: 2nd Annual Library For London 5K/Kids' 1K & Festival, 8:30am
Join us for our 2nd Annual Library for London 5K/Kid's 1K and Festival on Saturday March 28th, 2015 at 8:30 AM in our beautiful community of London, CA.

March 28: March on Main Street, 9-11am
April is National Child Abuse Prevention Awareness month. CASA of Tulare County and the Tulare County Child Abuse Prevention Council would like you to join us as we kick of child abuse prevention awareness month. At Garden St. Plaza there will be a short program and information booths from collaborative agencies as well as face painting for the kids!

March 28: Lawn-Free Garden Tour, 9am-3pm
Sequoia Garden Club in Visalia invites you to a garden tour with a twist--featuring only yards without lawns. Come see stellar examples of water-wise landscapes, and imagine beautiful ideas for your own yard. In the midst of an historic drought, we offer five gardens, with five approaches to turning a landscape from a guzzler into a sipper. Call 733-4832 for tickets ($15 in advance, $20 on tour day, if not sold out).

March 28: Women Veteran Spring Luncheon, 11am-2pm
At the Visalia Memorial Building, where the featured speaker will be David Rose, CalVet Field Outreach representative. The event is free to all women veterans.

March 28: Spring Kids Fest, 12-3:30pm
This afternoon of pure entertainment kicks off at 12pm and will go until 3:30pm. There will be more attractions than ever before including a 100 ft. giant slide, teacup ride, trackless train, flying with Dumbo, jump around dune buggies and the spinning wrecking ball, plus there will be numerous bounce houses and obstacle courses. E & M Reptile Family will be back to put on a special performance at 2pm. There will also be games, food, informational booths and local performers that the whole family can enjoy. This year's Kids Fest is sponsored by the Porterville Breakfast Lions, Town and Country Market, Maria Garcia, State Farm Agent and Jamba Juice. The event is designed for children ages 2-12. Admission to the park is free; however, children must have a wristband to participate in the activities. Wristbands may be purchased in advance for $4 at the Heritage Center, located at 256 E. Orange Avenue, Monday through Friday, 8am-5:30pm, or for $5 at the event. For more information about Kids Fest, call the Heritage Center at 791-7695 or check out the City of Porterville website.

March 28: Hanford Carnegie Museum League "Homes of Distinction" Tour, 4:30-8pm
From 4:30-6pm there will be a reception at the museum, after which--between 6 & 8pm--there will be a home tour throughout Hanford. Tickets are $40 single and $75 for couples, available at the museum, 109 E. 8th Street, Hanford, or at 584-1367. Check and credit card accepted. The event is a benefit for the museum.

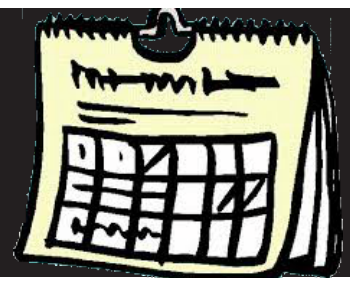
APRIL

April 1: Party in the Park, 4-6pm
Free Games, Bounce Houses and prizes! Food for sale to raise money for a new playground at Houston School.

April 2: 4th Annual Downtown Visalia Wine & Cheese Walk, 6-9pm
Come enjoy one of downtown Visalia's best events, and possibly discover a favorite winery. Tickets are $35 before March 20, and $40 after. You must be at least 21 to participate. For more information call (559) 732-7737.

April 2: A Community Forum--Envisioning Lemoore's Future, 6pm
The Lemoore Chamber of Commerce will hold a forum at the Train Depot for the public to bring ideas for future retail development in Lemoore.

April 3: P. Kay Woods "Edge" Photography Artist Reception, 5:30-8pm
P. Kay Woods is exhibiting some of her own images of "edges" as seen through her camera lens in the Brandon-Mitchell Gallery at the Spiritual Awareness Center in March and April. An artist reception will be held during the First Friday art walk on April 3 from 5:30-8 p.m. Woods will give a talk about her art at 6pm. The Brandon-Mitchell Gallery is located at the Spiritual Awareness Center, 117 S. Locust Street, Visalia. The gallery is open the first Friday of each month, 5:30-8pm, and Monday-Thursday from 9:30am-3:30pm



by ringing the bell. For more information, call 625-2441.

April 4: Color Vibe 5K -- Visalia, 9:00 AM - 11:30 AM
Come get C R A Z Y with us!!! The Color Vibe is coming to Visalia on April 4th and wants you to experience the most #VIBErant 5k of all time! Grab your friends and family and join us as we blast you with lots of fun, epic beats and TONS OF COLOR while you run/walk our course. Children 12 and under are FREE! You'll come as a blank canvas and leave a colorful mural!! A portion of our proceeds will also go towards a local charity, Pro Youth Heart! Sign up now before spots fill up! http://www.thecolorvibe.com/visalia.php# #ColorVibeVisalia

April 4: Distinguished Citizens & Business of the Year Awards Dinner, 6-9pm
The Hanford Chamber of Commerce presents "An Evening of Inspiration" at the Hanford Civic Auditorium. For more information call the Chamber at (559) 582-0483.

April 8: 50+Rocks Spring Open House, 11am-2pm
The Visalia Parks and Recreation Department announces the 50+Rocks Spring Open House at the Visalia Senior Center. The event is free for seniors (except for the $3.50 barbecue) and brings together seniors and the vendors which offer services for them. Please call 713-4381 to get an application for a vendor booth.

April 9: "Transitions--Creating Opportunities for Innovation and Success," 7:30-11am
The Training and Employment Association of Tulare County presents "Transitions--Creating Opportunities for Innovation and Success" at the Visalia Holiday Inn. Single tickets are $35, and a table for 8 is $250. For more information contact Hector Cartagena at (559) 651-1425.

April 10-12: Jazzaffair Music Festival
Join us for the 42nd annual Jazzaffair in Three Rivers! This 3 day festival of traditional Dixieland jazz music is one you won't want to miss. Purchase a ticket for the whole event, or just one day. This year's theme is "Jazz for the Generations". Bring your child, any age, and receive their ticket at half price (children under 12 free)! Find all the details and purchase tickets at www.Jazzaffair.info.

April 11: Rally Ride, 8:30am
Starting at Exeter Union High School & Ending at 224 North E Street. Calling all motorcycles, jeeps, hot rods, classic cars and mom-mobiles! Join us as we take a short memorial ride through the area, eat some steak sandwiches, bid on items at the silent auction, buy 50/50 tickets, listen to music, and perhaps donate blood to the Blood Bank, all while honoring Daniel Green and raising funds for his son Aiden.

April 11: Spring Fishing Derby, 9-11am
Bring your fishing pole and tackle to Hidden Valley Park pond for a morning of Rainbow Trout fishing, on the corner of 11th Avenue and Cortner Street.

April 11: 2015 Life Walk, 9am
The 20th Annual Tulare-Kings Right to Life walk will be in Visalia's Plaza Park. For more information call 732-5000.

April 12: Celebrant Singers Bowl-a-thon, 1pm
At AMF Visalia Lanes, 1740 W. Caldwell Ave., check in begins at 1:00 p.m. and the Opening Ceremony is at 2:00 p.m. This is an annual fundraiser to help send Celebrant teams on their International Missions outreaches to Guatemala, El Salvador and Turkey. All members of the community are invited to participate by sponsoring a lane, forming a team, signing up individually to bowl, or sponsoring a bowler. Each sponsored bowler receives a free t-shirt and is eligible to win prizes donated by local businesses. Bowlers raise money through "per pin" pledges or flat donations and will bowl three games. For more information visit www.celebrants.org/bowlathon or call 559-740-4000.

April 13: Great Conversations--"Self Reliance", 4-5:30pm
A discussion of this Great Work by Emerson will take place on the COS main campus in Hospital Rock 133.

April 15 to April 18: Anything Goes
Golden West High School will present the classical musical about the age-old tale of boy meets girl. More than 115 students will participate. For information, visit www.vusd.org

April 16: Rumors of Polar Bears, 7pm (and April 17 at 4:30pm)
La Joya Middle School proudly presents *Rumors of Polar Bears* by Jonathon Dorf through YouthPLAYS. *Rumors of Polar Bears* is about a ragtag band of teens who struggle for survival in the face of a climate induced catastrophe. Despite having to scavenge for food and water, they find fun where they can, frolicking in the 'party pool' and forgetting themselves just long enough to be teenagers. But when forced to flee their makeshift home, they'll encounter everything from failing paradises to a frozen-in-time former pre-kindergarten drama class, deadly bikers determined to turn the chaos into their own new world order, and a mysterious people that even the bikers won't cross. As the road takes its toll, relationships shift – what will happen to this little patchwork family?

April 17 to 26: The Fantastic Mr. Fox
The Enchanted Playhouse presents "The Fantastic Mr. Fox." The play will be presented on Friday and Saturday at 7pm, and Sunday at 2pm at Main Street Theatre, 307 E. Main, Visalia. For information, visit enchantedplayhouse.org.

April 17: 2nd Annual Hands In the Community Golf Tournament, 12-5pm
Hands in the Community will hold its second annual golf tournament at Valley Oaks Golf Course. Lunch provided. Raffle Tickets, Mulligan, Putting contest extra. $400.00 per Golf Team 1 Hole Sponsor $150.00 2 Hole Sponsor $250.00. For more information contact Lester Moon 559-625-3822.

April 17: Book Signing and Free Workshop, 5:15-6:30pm
A 45-minute workshop at the Cosmic Corral--209 N. Irwin St., Hanford, will help you decode your love style. Kay Packard's new book will teach you the fundamentals of how to read the unique markings found on your own hands. Assignments guide you to integrate both understood and misunderstood aspects of yourself into meaningful living-statements.

April 17: Keith Sweat at Eagle Mountain Casino, 8pm
Eagle Mountain Casino welcomes R & B Sensation Keith Sweat to the Event Center. Keith will be singing hits such as "Twisted", "I'll Give All My Love to You", and "I Want to Love you Down". His sensual and rhythmic lyrics will have you swooning, singing and dancing the evening away. Tickets on sale now online or in the gift shop and start at only $30. Summit Club and Black Card members receive $5 off tickets purchased in the gift shop.

April 18—New Planets!, 1pm
Make and launch a rocket to the Asteroid Belt. Play a board game to get your rocket to new planets Vesta and Ceres! Explore the planets at ImagineU With a NASA ambassador in March, April and May**.** ImagineU Children's Museum is excited to have its very own NASA/Jet Propulsion Lab solar system ambassador, Susan Morrison, coming to Visalia to teach science in a fun, interactive way. These Saturday events are free with admission price (free for members). ImagineU is located at 700 E. Main St., Visalia. It is open Wednesday through Friday from 10-4 and Saturday from 12-4. Cost is $5 for adults and children 2 and over. Children under 2 are free. For more information, call 733-5975 or go to www.imagineumuseum.com

April 18: Book signing, Free Mini-Hand-Readings, and Wine Tasting, 4:30-6:30pm
At the Totem Market and Deli (under new management) – at the entrance to Sequoia National Park 45186 Sierra Drive, Three Rivers. Kay Packard's new book will teach you the fundamentals of how to read the unique markings found on your own hands.

April 18: Colossal Collage, 7:30pm
Tulare County Symphony Orchestra closes out its season with the "other" great Symphony No. 5, the one by Mahler. The concert will be held at the Visalia Fox Theatre. For information, visit tularecountysymphony.com.

April 22: Labor Law Compliance Series, 7-10am.
The Visalia Chamber of Commerce, in cooperation with Pacific Employers, will present the state-mandated Supervisors' Sexual Harassment Prevention Training Seminar & Workshop at the Lamp Liter Inn. Registration & Breakfast 7:30-8 am; Seminar 8-10am. Reservations required. For more information call the Chamber, 734-5876.

April 22 to May 1: Treasures of Ireland
The Visalia Chamber of Commerce offers this group trip, which includes airfare, 11 meals and a professional travel guide. For information, call 734-5876.

April 23: Honor A Hero, Hire A Vet Job & Resource Fair, 9am-2pm
For Veterans, Military, National Guard, Reservist and their dependants, this year's job fair will be held in the Golden Eagle Arena at West HillsCollegeLemoore-campus,locatedat555CollegeAvenue in Lemoore. For more information call James Bradford at (559) 852-2151.

April 24: Wellness and Informational Fair for Seniors, Families and Caregivers, 9am-2pm
Wellness and Informational Fair for Seniors, Families, and Care givers at Quail Park Retirement Village from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. This event will provide information and resources for seniors and several free health screenings. Raffle prizes and refreshments. For additional information, please call 624-3503. Quail Park is located at 4520 W. Cypress Ave., Visalia.

April 25: Civil War 360 Sprint Car Series
Civil War 360 Sprint Car Series presented by Flowmaster will be held at Thunderbowl Raceway at Tulare Fairgrounds. Western RaceSaver Sprints and Vintage Cars will also be held. For information, visit www.thunderbowlraceway.com.

April 27: Great Conversations--"Out of the Cradle, Endlessly Rocking", 4-5:30pm
A discussion of this Great Work by Whitman will take place on the COS main campus in Hospital Rock 133.

MAY

May 2: USAC Western Midgets
USAC Western Midgets, Vintage Cars and Western RaceSaver Sprints will be held at Thunderbowl Raceway at Tulare Fairgrounds. For information, visit www.thunderbowlraceway.com.

May 8: Business Seminar Series Diversity Training, 3:30-5pm
At the train depot/Lemoore Chamber. Tickets $15 for members, $20 for non-members. For more information call (559) 924-6401.

May 9—Gravity! 1pm
Learn what gravity does to you and why people seem to float while on the International Space Station. Then make a space station module with a floating astronaut in it! Explore the planets at ImagineU With a NASA ambassador in March, April and May**.** ImagineU Children's Museum is excited to have its very own NASA/Jet Propulsion Lab solar system ambassador, Susan Morrison, coming to Visalia to teach science in a fun, interactive way. These Saturday events are free with admission price (free for members). ImagineU is located at 700 E. Main St., Visalia. It is open Wednesday through Friday from 10-4 and Saturday from 12-4. Cost is $5 for adults and children 2 and over. Children under 2 are free. For more information, call 733-5975 or go to www.imagineumuseum.com

Sports

The Growth of a Champion

Stefan Barros

The 2014-15 Mission Oak girls basketball team was not expected to do what it did this year--win the 2015 Division III Valley championship over Fresno High at Selland Arena. This is an accomplishment that possibly wasn't expected until next season by these Hawks.

Head coach Dave Caetano admitted that this team was supposed to be improved this season, with the players he had coming back and a good incoming freshman class, but winning Valley is something that wasn't exactly expected heading into the season.

"We are definitely a year ahead of schedule," Caetano said. "I didn't see this happening until maybe next season."

Caetano began to realize the potential of his team when they starting getting on the same page, and he credits the girls' commitment and development as big factor in their success this season.

"This community doesn't have a strong youth program, so these girls had to develop once they got here, but I have a lot of good athletes that are committed and it was just a matter of them all getting on the same page, and that happened about eight to ten games into the season," he said.

Being on the same page was something that Caetano considered to be a strength for his team; a chemistry that the team began to share as the season went on. Caetano believes the chemistry and the buy-in from the players tied together to create success this season.

"The team chemistry is something that's intangible," he said. "It had to built up through time, and they began to understand the system and understand the defense we were running. I told them about eight games into the season that they have to defend to win, and they totally bought it."

Another big reason behind the success of the Hawks this season was the strong leadership of three team captains, junior Tristen Myers, sophomore Samantha Ruvalcaba, and senior Kaelah Munley, the coach said. Myers explained that the teams' success this season has to do with players getting to know each other better.

"We developed from last year to this year. As the season went along we started work well together as a team and we were a high-assist team, so that shows the chemistry we have," she said. "We'll just be playing for fun. We have nothing to lose at this point."

Ruvalcaba stressed how important it is for the Hawks to play as a team, and how vital it has been to their success.

"We don't play as individuals," she said. "We play as a team. We have chemistry as a group."

Ruvalcaba went on to explain team's outlook on the state playoffs.

"We have nothing to lose. This can be good for us to see what we can do next year," she said.

Senior Kaelah Munley, spoke about some of the signal wins that the team had earned throughout the season, which gave them the confidence they needed to help win a Valley championship.

"When we beat Monache for the first time, we started to see how good we could be. Also, beating Fresno at Selland was special because we had lost to them twice already," she said.

Caetano explained that even though he did have captains play well, and carry the team throughout the regular season, he was surprised early on by two freshmen who burst onto the scene, Rhegan Fernandez and Kambryia Elzy.

"They took over day one. They both have very high basketball IQ's, and on the biggest stage, in the title game, they put on a show," he said.

Another freshman is 6' 4" Samantha Arellano. Arrellano came into the picture in-season, and Caetano identifies her as one of the reasons the team went on a big win streak during the regular season.

"She came in after about eight games. She can improve on some skills, but she's still so young. She can dominate the Valley," he said.

This has definitely made him a happy man, Caetano said. And, his team does not need one player to score like crazy to win.

Samantha Ruvalcaba, Tristen Myers, Kaelah Mundley

"We have two seniors this season who contributed, but it's been the youth of this team that's contributed the most," he said. "The team has worked great together and that's why we've been one of the leading teams in the state in assists, and that stat jumps out. We don't need high scorers to win."

With all of the positives of the Hawks team (27-5) there are a few negatives to go along. Caetano has stressed consistency as something the team can work on in order to get even better.

"We need to work on being more consistent all the time. We won some close games this year that shouldn't have gotten that close because of blown leads. We could also learn to grow as a team. There is always more you can do when you when you have team this young," he said.

With such a young team, you would expect the players would possibly be overwhelmed by the playoff stage. What happened was quite the contrary, according to Caetano.

"The players were never nervous before the playoff games. They were never tight. They were ready to play all the time. Showed great maturity all season," he said.

The Hawks did lose their State Playoff game this past week, but Caetano discussed his mindset and the team's mindset heading into that game as Valley champions.

"They already achieved the biggest goal," he said. "Winning Valley was the icing on the cake, but this game and tournament is about going for the sprinkles on the cake."

College Rodeo Comes to WHCC Arena March 20-21

Staff Reports

The West Hills College Coalinga (WHCC) men's and women's rodeo team will host competitors from seven teams in the West Coast Region of the National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association on Friday and Saturday, March 20 and 21, including schools from California and Nevada.

2014-15 WHCC Women's Rodeo Team

Teams from WHCC, Feather River College, Lassen Community College, California State University Fresno, Cuesta College, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo and the University of Las Vegas will be competing.

"We are hosting this event because it is a great fundraiser for our college and community," said WHCC Rodeo assistant coach Brooke Jackson. "It's also important to keep the tradition of rodeo alive."

The rodeo opens on 5pm on Friday, with a calf dressing contest featuring students and staff from West Hills College Coalinga. Applications for participation in this event will be accepted until March 19 at traceyjuarena@whccd.edu.

Friday will also feature a stock dog exhibition from Coalinga's Mike Cannady and rodeo clown Clint Sylvester, who will keep the crowd entertained throughout the night.

At 7pm that evening, the rodeo continues with riders competing in nine events.

The rodeo finals will get under way on Saturday at 11am, with a championship round for the top 10 contestants from Friday's events.

Admission is $8 for adults, $5 for students 17 and under and free for children under 10. Admission is free for WHC ASB members with cards.

2014-15 WHCC Men's Rodeo Team

The WHCC rodeo team has had a good year of competition, with the men's team currently sitting 7th in the region and the women's sitting 6th in the region. Several members of the team are also ranked highly in the region.

Jacob Lees is ranked fourth in the region in bareback riding. Jose Machado is ranked 13th in tie down roping while teammate Edgar Machado is 7th in steer wrestling. Pedro Montes is 15th in heeling and Peter Rincon is 14th in team roping heeling.

Autumn Isreal is 14th in team roping heading while Madison Horton is 8th in the region in the breakaway.

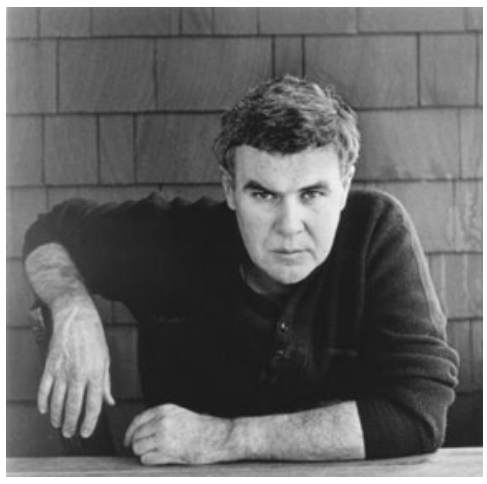
The rodeo arena is at 518 W. Gale Ave. in Coalinga. For more information, visit westhillscollege.com.

Great Conversations

The Desire for (Dis)Connection: Carver and Klass

Joseph R. Teller

Taking a break from the more challenging works we have recently discussed, the Great Books group this week read two short stories: "Fat," by Raymond Carver, and "Not a Good Girl," by Perri Klass. Both are in an anthology of short stories published by the Great Books Foundation titled The 7 Deadly Sins, and although the anthology is not a collection of moral exempla, many of the stories explore the darker nuances and complexities of human relationships, including works by authors as diverse as William Faulkner, Nathan Englander, Elizabeth Bowen, Xu Xi, and Flannery O'Connor.



Raymond Carver

"Fat" is told by a first-person narrator, a waitress who tells her friend Rita about a customer she recently served. The customer is an obese man dining alone, and although the narrator's coworkers insensitively make fun of the man behind his back, the narrator finds herself slowly transformed from indifference into deep empathy as she serves him. She becomes aware that she's "after something" from him, though she doesn't know what, and she notices subtle details about him that reveal his humanity—his "creamy fingers," his habit of "puffing" when he speaks, his relish and gusto as he eats, his isolation. By the end of the story, the narrator ends up not only defending the man against her friends' insensitivity, but identifying with him, and feeling in the last line of the tale that her entire life "is going to change."

Similarly, "Not a Good Girl" is told by a first-person female narrator. But whereas the narrator of "Fat" comes to an intimate sympathy for another human being, this narrator's priority in life is complete isolation from intimacy with others. A researcher in immunology, the narrator recounts her 48-hour "two-night stand" with a graduate student named Eric.

Though he initially seems as emotionally detached as the narrator, the young and naïve Eric eventually develops feelings for the narrator, pathetically asking her as she gets out of the car at the airport, "If we lived near each other, would you have an affair with me?" The narrator, however, will have none of it. Throughout the liaison, she consciously avoids emotional bonding: "Isn't the point of a one-night stand that you get off on the novelty and adventure without having to worry about the other person?" she claims at one point, while at another juncture in the short affair, she finds herself mentally "redesigning" her lover to suit her own fantasies. While early in the story the narrator vacillates between detachment and the temptation for connection, ultimately she distances herself from the whole experience, concluding the story by comparing her two-night stand to a seminar or experiment in which emotions—and people—are variables to be controlled.

Though both stories chart different emotional trajectories for their narrators, they both provoke fascinating questions about our desires for intimacy and connection, as well as our equally prevalent tendencies toward selfishness and isolation.

Why do we sometimes stay in relationships with people we do not like, or even in relationships that are harmful to us? What causes us to connect with some people, and to isolate ourselves from others? To what extent can we—or should we—control others? What do we expect to gain from relationships, and what do we expect to give them? And why do we sometimes treat others as a means to our own ends, rather than as ends in themselves?

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West Hills Magazine Highlights Student Success

The Spring 2015 issue of West Hills Magazine is now available online. The fourth issue of the magazine highlights the district's emphasis on student success, achievements by student athletes both on and off the field and the increasing role of technology in the district's classrooms.

WEST HILLS
Spring 2015
magazine
For These Athletes, Grades Really Do Matter
All American Scholars, Players Perform On and Off the Field
Rodeo Leads to Career Doing Stunt Work In Hollywood Films
Technology Impacts the Way Higher Education is Delivered: 'It's a Game Changer'

"West Hills Magazine examines the results of our efforts in the 'relentless' approach to student success in this issue," said Frank Gornick, chancellor of West Hills Community College District, in his welcome column in the magazine.

This 28-page issue delves into several big topics, including how WHCCD's early adoption of educational plans for students, priority registration and the use of technology has impacted campuses and how WHCCD was ahead of the curve in this approach.

The district's push to conserve energy on its campuses and in its offices is featured.

The issue also highlights student achievements on both campuses, including the unprecedented 10-1 season of the WHCC Coalinga Falcons football team and the recent naming of three All-Americans on the WHCC Lemoore Men's soccer team.

An inside look at WHCC Coalinga's effort to reach foster youth through a foster youth support program is offered as well as a look at the district's unique Employee Scholar's Program, which allows employees to go back to school with funding from the district.

Finally, the success of a former WHCC team roper is discussed and how his experience helped him become a Hollywood stunt man.

The magazine is available in an online version on the district website and printed copies will be mailed to donors and friends of WHCCD.

A link to the magazine is on the district's homepage at www.westhillscollege.com. For a direct link to the magazine, go to: http://goo.gl/d977KU. The online version includes an option to download a PDF copy of the magazine.

WHCCD Soliciting Applications for Measure T Bond Oversight Committee

The West Hills Community College District is now soliciting applications for service on a Measure T Citizens' Bond Oversight Committee, which will review and inform the public about expenditures related to the Measure T bond measure proceeds.

The measure, passed in November of 2014, authorizes the District to issue up to $20,000,000 in general obligation bonds and its passage obligates the District to form an oversight committee.

The committee, mandated by the Education Code, will consist of a minimum of seven members from seven different groups. Based on criteria established by Proposition 39, the committee must consist of members from these groups:

- One member active in a business organization representing the business community located in the WHCCD
- One member active in a senior citizen's organization
- One member active in a bona-fide taxpayers association
- One member who is a student currently enrolled in the WHCCD and active in a community college group, like student government
- One member active in the support and organization of a community college or the community colleges of the District
- Two members of the community at-large appointed by the Board

To qualify for membership, the applicant must additionally be at least 18 years old and reside within the WHCCD's geographic boundary and must not be an employee, official, vendor, contractor or consultant of the District.

Candidates will need to submit written applications, at which time the WHCCD Board of Trustees will appoint from the list of candidates.

The district is also accepting applications for service on the WHCCD's other oversight committees, including the Northern Area of the School Facilities Improvement District Number One Measure Q committee and the Lemoore Area Measure E committee, School Facilities Improvement District Number Three.

Please visit the WHCCD website at www.westhillscollege.com/district/district_bond_measures/index.asp for more information and a link to the application, or contact Donna Isaac in the Chancellor's Office at donnaisaac@whccd.edu or 559-934-2102.

Next deadline:
***Still* February 9, 2015**

Health

Kaweah Delta Hospice In Need of Volunteers

Kaweah Delta Hospice is looking for volunteers to help provide relief, comfort and hope to patients.

Anyone interested in attending the next volunteer orientation from 9am to 3pm on Wednesday, April 1 and Friday, April 3, must first pass a background check.

Hospice volunteers assist families in a variety of ways including: visiting patients, providing pet-assisted social therapy, foot care, music therapy, transportation, office help and assisting with special events. Volunteers also assist with grief support for children. Additionally, Kaweah Delta Hospice honors veterans through patient services and volunteers. Veterans are invited to join the volunteer team and, whenever possible, they will be assigned to care for veterans so that they can continue to serve comrades in service.

"Hospice could not exist without devoted volunteers," said Debbie Beringer, Supportive Care Supervisor for Kaweah Delta Hospice. "We've had volunteers do everything from play harp for patients to bring pets along for pet therapy. Sometimes it's just a matter of being there for someone who's mourning a loved one. "

To get the process started or learn more about Kaweah Delta Hospice, call Beringer at 559-733-0642.

All volunteers are provided with a two-day orientation, in-service trainings, and ongoing support. Volunteer hours are flexible and based on the patient's needs and the volunteer's ability.

Kaweah Delta Hospice is a not-for-profit healthcare organization dedicated to helping patients with end-of-life comfort care wherever they live in Tulare County - at home, in a residential care facility, or at a skilled nursing facility. The organization works to relieve pain and other symptoms, as well as provide emotional support and spiritual counseling. Patients and their families are offered a variety of services designed to cover every aspect of their lives including a physician, a nurse, a home health aid, a chaplain, a social worker and bereavement follow up.

Kaweah Delta Health Care District is the only facility with Magnet status in the San Joaquin Valley serving children and adults and is the only trauma center between Fresno and Bakersfield. The district offers a comprehensive scope of services. For more information, visit www.kaweahdelta.org or follow Kaweah Delta on Twitter and Facebook.

Visalia MD Launches Weight Loss Program

Gilbert Sunio, MD, an internal medicine physician with Visalia Medical Clinic, is now offering medically based, personalized weight loss programs through the Center for Medical Weight Loss.

The Center for Medical Weight Loss brings trained medical expertise to the weight loss field. A primary goal, Dr. Sunio explained, is to break food addictions to help patients reach a safe and healthy target weight quickly, and helping them maintain weight loss by adopting healthy habits.

"The Center for Medical Weight Loss is a physician-directed, non-surgical approach based on each patient's unique metabolism, hormonal or other disorders, medication and other physical weight loss issues," Dr. Sunio explained.

Dr. Sunio is Board certified by the American Board of Internal Medicine. For information, visit www.sunioweightloss.com or call at 738-7565.

Kaweah Delta Welcomes New Dialysis Medical Director

Kaweah Delta Health Care District welcomes Tariq Javed, M.D., a nephrologist, as medical director of Kaweah Delta Porterville Dialysis.

Dr. Javed is board certified in nephrology and internal medicine and is seeing patients at Kaweah Delta Porterville Dialysis, 385 N. Pearson Drive, and at his Porterville office, 390 N. Pearson Drive (across from Porterville Dialysis).

FHCN Hosts 16th Annual Health Fair in Ivanhoe

Family HealthCare Network is pleased to announce its 16th Annual Ivanhoe Health Fair, Thursday, March 26, from 4 to 7pm. Presented in partnership with the Tulare County Gang Prevention Task Force's Step Up program, community members are invited to join Family HealthCare Network for the event, which will take place at Ivanhoe Elementary School, located at 16030 Ave 332.

For its 16th year, the health fair will include free health, vision, and dental screenings for adults and children. Family HealthCare Network has invited local agencies to attend the event to provide information on their services to the community. The day will also include live entertainment by Ivanhoe Elementary School's Folkloric dance team, a free dinner provided by Step Up, and free raffle drawings for all who attend.

Family HealthCare Network will also have Certified Educators and Certified Enrollment Counselors available to assist with any questions regarding the Affordable Care Act and enrollment into Covered California. For more information about Family HealthCare Network's Ivanhoe Health Fair, please contact Madel Comonfort, Community Health Representative at (559) 798-8301.

Family HealthCare Network is a private nonprofit organization that operates federally qualified health centers. Our mission is to provide quality health care to everyone in the communities we serve.

For more information about Family HealthCare Network, please call 877-960-3426. Visit our website at www.FHCN.org, like us on Facebook at www.Facebook.com/fhcn.org, or follow us on Twitter at www.Twitter.com/FHCN.

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Agriculture

Young Farmers and Ranchers Celebrate Local Agriculture with Annual Charity Race

We all benefit from a safe, reliable food supply produced by our very own American family farmers. To celebrate our local agriculture community, Tulare County Farm Bureau's Young Farmers and Ranchers (YF&R) committee will host their annual Grocery Cart Race on Sunday, March 22 at 7am in Tulare to celebrate National Ag Week, March 16-22.

Participants from last year's race.

National Ag Week is a time to recognize and celebrate the importance of agriculture. Agriculture provides most everything we eat, use and wear on a daily basis. Farm Bureau and the Young Farmers and Ranchers program strives to educate those not involved in agriculture the importance of the industry.

"We look forward to the annual Grocery Cart Race every year. It's a fun-filled event that serves as a friendly competition and a great way to give back to the community and to celebrate National Ag Week," said Lauren Crivelli, this year's chair of Grocery Cart Race.

"We're excited to celebrate agriculture while filling our carts with food that is donated to a local food charity in support of those who experience food insecurity in our community."

The race itself consists of teams that will compete in a timed event to fill their shopping carts with a predetermined list of food items. Grocery Cart Race takes place at FoodsCo, located at 1210 E. Prosperity Avenue in Tulare.

Last year, Grocery Cart Race teams raised approximately $1,250 for the purchase of food, which resulted in over a thousand pounds of food donated to the local food bank. Proceeds this year will also be donated to Tulare County FoodLink.

Young Farmers and Ranchers develop leadership skills while volunteering time as active, vital members of the county Farm Bureau. For more information about joining YF&R, contact the Tulare County Farm Bureau at 732-8301 or yfr@tulcofb.org or follow the group on Facebook.

Farm Bureau's Young Farmers and Ranchers are active agriculturists between the ages of 18 and 35 and involved in production, banking, business, and many other areas of the industry. Young Farmers and Ranchers develop leadership skills while volunteering time as active, vital members of the County Farm Bureaus.

Porterville Resident Among Leadership Farm Bureau Class Members

Intensive leadership training and a focus on issues affecting California farmers and ranchers lie ahead for the 10 people chosen for the 2015 class of the Leadership Farm Bureau program. The Class of 2015 was formally introduced today during the annual California Farm Bureau Federation Leaders Conference in Sacramento.

Leadership Farm Bureau is a leadership-development program sponsored by CFBF that includes classroom sessions in advocacy training, communications, team building, leadership methods, media training and Farm Bureau policy development. Field sessions will include tours in both Northern and Southern California that will allow deeper exploration of issues including water development and immigration policy.

Members of the Leadership Farm Bureau Class of 2015 include John Guthrie of Porterville, who grows almonds, citrus fruit, walnuts and row crops and raises cattle, and serves on the Tulare County Farm Bureau board of directors;

The Leadership Farm Bureau class will meet throughout 2015, culminating in graduation at the CFBF Annual Meeting in Reno in December. For further information about the Leadership Farm Bureau program, visit www.cfbf.com/lfb.

The California Farm Bureau Federation works to protect family farms and ranches on behalf of more than 57,000 members statewide and as part of a nationwide network of more than 6.2 million Farm Bureau members.

Valencia Orange Production Forecast 20 Million Cartons

The March 2014-15 Valencia orange forecast is 20 million cartons. The March 10 National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) forecast was based on the results of the 2014-15 Valencia Orange Objective Measurement (O.M.) Survey, which was conducted from January 16 to February 14, 2015.

Estimated fruit set per tree, fruit diameter, trees per acre, bearing acreage, and oranges per carton were used in the statistical models estimating production. The season has been dry in many areas and measurements are indicating an average fruit size, but the fruit set has been negatively impacted. Survey data indicated an average fruit set per tree of 545, well below the five-year average of 639 and the lowest set since the 2008-09 season. The average March 1 diameter was 2.571 inches, slightly above the five-year average of 2.562.

Survey History

A Valencia Orange Objective Measurement Survey was conducted from the 1985-86 to 1993-94 seasons before suspension due to a lack of funding. The survey has been conducted since it was reinstated for the 1999-00 season, with the exception of the 2006-07 season due to a substantial freeze. The data from the first three years after the survey was reinstated were used for research purposes in developing crop-estimating models.

Survey Sample

A sample of 577 Valencia orange groves was randomly selected proportional to acreage, county and variety representation for the state, with 539 of these groves being utilized in this survey. Once a grove was randomly chosen and grower permission was granted, two trees were randomly selected for each grove. For each randomly selected tree, its trunk was measured along with all connected branches. A random number table was then used to select a branch, and then all connected branches from the randomly-selected branch were measured. This process was repeated until a branch was reached with no significant limbs beyond it.

This randomly-selected branch, called the terminal branch, was then closely inspected to count all fruit connected to it, as well as all of the fruit along the path from the trunk to the terminal branch. Since each selected path has a probability of selection associated with it, a probability-based method was then applied to estimate a fruit count for the entire tree. In the last week of the survey period, fruit diameter measurements were made on the right quadrant of four trees surrounding the two trees of every third sampled grove. These measurements were used to estimate an average fruit diameter per tree. The sampled groves were primarily in the top Valencia orange producing counties of Tulare, Kern, Fresno, Ventura and San Diego.

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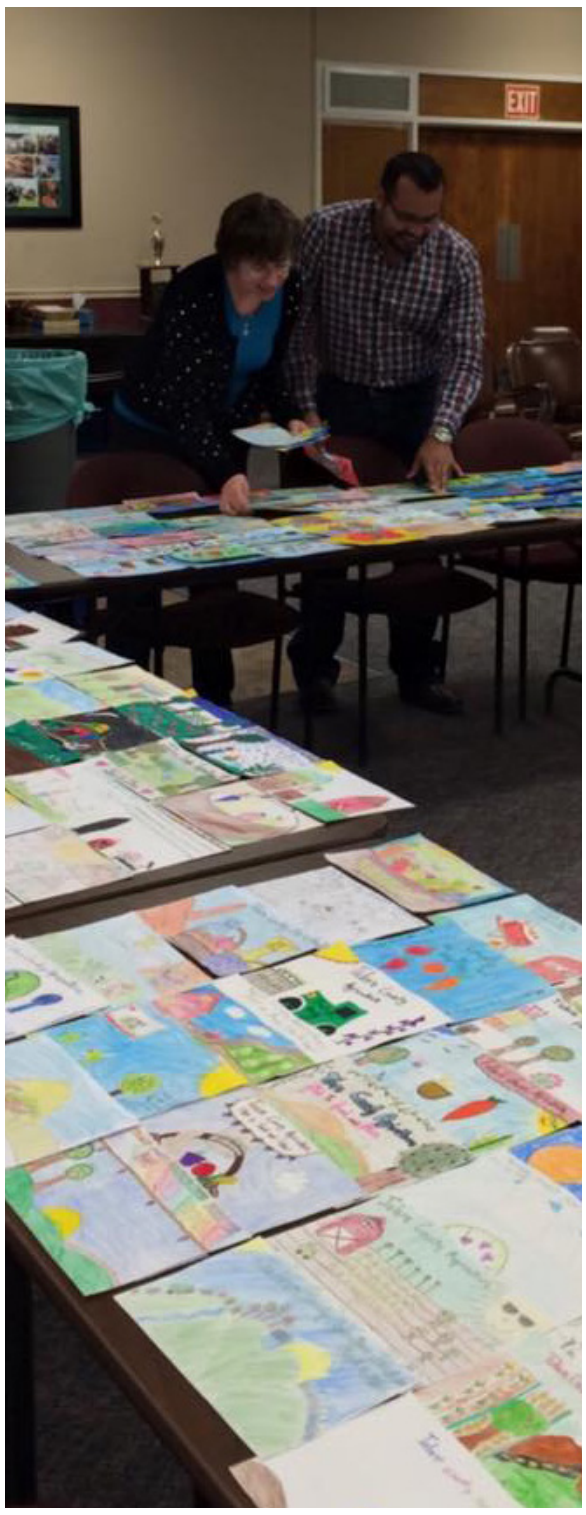

Farm Bureau officials judge Calendar Art Contest submissions.

OVERALL WINNER	Grade	School
Janette Madrigal	11th	Orosi High School, Orosi
Francisco Fernandez	12th	Orosi High School, Orosi
Demesio Zaragoza	5th	Strathmore Middle School, Strathmore
Nina Cerda	6th	Cherry Ave School, Tulare
Gabriella Adame	11th	Orosi High School, Orosi
Nathaniel Rodriguez	2nd	George L. Snowden School, Farmersville
Catricia Alvarez	3rd	John F. Kennedy Elementary, Dinuba
Alyssa Boyd	8th	Hot Springs Elementary, California Hot Springs
Jessica Ostrea	12th	Orosi High School, Orosi
Adrianna Barajas	2nd	George L. Snowden School, Farmersville
Karina Arenivaz	11th	Orosi High School, Orosi
Isaiah Garcia	3rd	George L. Snowden School, Farmersville
Mikayla Osmon	11th	Summit Charter Collegiate Academy, Porterville
Calissa Butler-Journey	4th	Sycamore Valley Academy, Visalia

Calendar Art Winners to Be Recognized During Ag Week

Staff Reports

Tulare County students in grades K-12 submitted their entries for Tulare County Farm Bureau's 18th annual calendar art contest. The goal of the contest is to promote awareness about agriculture in Tulare County and the importance of an abundant and healthy food supply. From 750 entries, 14 students were chosen based on the agricultural content, originality, neatness and reproducibility of their artwork.

The students submitted original artwork depicting this year's theme, "Tulare County Agriculture First in Food and Fiber". All entries were judged by a panel of representatives from the contest's sponsors: Tulare County Farm Bureau and Tulare County Office of Education.

Overall winner Janette Madrigal, an 11th grader from Orosi High School, will have her artwork featured on the calendar's front cover and will receive a $50 cash award. The additional student artists, listed below, will receive a $25 prize and will have their artwork featured inside the calendar as monthly winners.

During National Agriculture Week, March 16-22, the winners will be presented their prizes at a special presentation at the County Board of Supervisors' meeting on Tuesday, March 17 at 9am at the Board of Supervisors' chambers in Visalia. To learn more about National Agriculture Week visit www.agday.org.

The winning artwork will be used to create a 12-month calendar which celebrates agriculture in Tulare County. Each year, the calendar is printed and distributed to schools throughout the county and is available to the public at no cost. For a copy of the 2015-2016 TCFB Agricultural Art calendar, please contact the Tulare County Farm Bureau at 732-8301.

The field is narrowed down.

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